

**UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER**

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION**

**SCALING THE WALLS OF SILENCE:  
THE STORIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE  
EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**SUSAN M. COLLIS**

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2010



## **IMAGING SERVICES NORTH**

Boston Spa, Wetherby  
West Yorkshire, LS23 7BQ  
[www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

**CONTAINS  
PULLOUTS**

UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy

**SCALING THE WALLS OF SILENCE: THE STORIES OF YOUNG  
PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.**

Susan M. Collis

This thesis examines the stories of young people who have experienced domestic violence. A hermeneutical methodology was adopted which culminated in an in-depth analysis and interpretation of their stories. Seeking to understand their stories, the chosen method of analysis revealed a multi-layered and complex view of experience which specifically drew attention to the emotional journeys of each young person through suffering. Their 'feeling' voices emerged and were recorded, demonstrating a commitment to recognising and raising the voices of those who have been silenced, neglected or disempowered. The aim was also to uncover those aspects of the young people's lives which showed their means of coping with their experiences of domestic violence and this resulted in the exposure of convergent aspects of coping competence and emotionality. The themes of 'voice', 'view' and 'vision' which emerged from layers of interpretative analysis express the complexity and depth of personal experience. Each identifies the unique identity, the significant relationships and the spiritual and emotional fortitude of each of the young people. Their stories reflect 'waves of resilience' which wash away the adverse effects of domestic violence and abuse.

It is acknowledged that this study is subjective and reflexive in nature, and that the author has a personal, emotional connection to the overarching subject of the research, domestic violence, and to those who have contributed to the research. The 'baggage' of the author is openly admitted and viewed in the context of postmodernist, feminist theory and practice.

## **Acknowledgements**

This research would not have been possible without the support of five young people. I wish to thank them for giving me their stories, and for their courage and optimism, which made this research possible.

I am grateful to the Support Worker who believed in this research, because he wanted to 'know how young people feel'. I thank him for all that he has done and still does for young people who have experienced domestic violence, and for his trust in me.

I thank Bridget Egan and Jane Erricker for their constant encouragement and enthusiasm.

I shall always be grateful to them for helping me, especially at times of struggle.



## **Contents**

### **Introduction: unveiling the walls of silence**

**1**

*Domestic violence; the aims of the research; main aim; research questions;  
young people's stories; walls of silence: using autobiography and story;  
research outline.*

### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **A Literature Review - searching for others' voices**

##### **Part One**

**18**

*Domestic violence; children and young people and domestic violence;  
coping strategies; talking and listening to children and young people;  
children's needs and rights.*

##### **Part Two**

**38**

*Causes of gender violence; power; personal, private and public  
knowledges; repressed knowledge and emotion; feeling voices;  
emotional analysis; emotions, spirituality and suffering;  
feminist dilemmas.*

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Methodology: gazing at the walls**

#### **Part One**

**63**

*A hermeneutic enquiry; the search for meaning in stories; ontological and epistemological positions; reflexivity; concern for the individual; subjectivity; personal and social history; methodology and action.*

#### **Scaling the walls: appropriate climbing boots needed**

**76**

*Interviewing; qualitative research; semi-structured interviews; non-judgemental approach; interview power relations; interviewing and action.*

#### **Reaching the top: analysis theory**

**82**

*Interpreting the data; finding categories, using voice- relational ideas; a voice centred method of analysis; feminist influences; subjectivity and analysis; analysis and action.*

#### **Ethical considerations – reflecting on the walls**

**89**

*Safety and well being of the young people; vulnerability of the young people; positions of power; informed decision and choice; commitment to care; ethics and feminist research; my moral voice; qualitative research and ethics; autobiographical and personal concerns; gaining consent; confidentiality; ethics and actions.*

## **Part Two**

**102**

### **Data Collection: the climb begins**

*The young people; interview themes; support after the interviews;  
a safe place; conversation flow; informed consent; interview questions  
and structure; ending the interviews; my experience as interviewer;  
transcription.*

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Analysis: views through a chink in the wall**

**117**

*Analysis and voice; layer one of analysis – forming case studies.*

### **Each young person's story – first layer of analysis**

**121**

*Scott – 14 year old boy; case study of Scott;*

*Coral – 14 year old girl; case study of Coral;*

*Terry – 13 year old boy; case study of Terry;*

*Karl – 12 year old boy; case study of Karl;*

*Rose – 15 year old girl; case study of Rose;*

### **Views of the voices: findings of emotionality**

**160**

*Layer two – emotionality.*

*Emotionality: locating the feeling voice.*

## **Disempowering emotionality and abuse: locating the suffering voice**

**161**

*Fearfulness; fearfulness and guilt; fearfulness and concealment;*

*managing fearfulness; fear and anxiety; fearfulness and behaviour;*

*fearfulness and close relationships;*

*Aggressiveness; elicitors of aggression; aggressiveness and relationships;*

*aggressiveness and harm; aggressiveness and violence;*

*Bitterness; bitterness and loss; bitterness and resentment; bitterness and injury.*

## **Humanising emotionality and abuse: locating the healing voice**

**191**

*Compassion; compassion and empathy; compassion and justice;*

*compassion and pity; compassion and happiness; compassion received.*

*Hopefulness; hopefulness, affliction and pain; hopefulness and light;*

*hopefulness and spirituality; hopefulness and waiting; hopefulness and justice.*

*Peacefulness; peacefulness and feeling safe; forgiveness and peacefulness;*

*peacefulness and reconciliation; peacefulness and play; peacefulness and gratitude; peacefulness and resistance to evil.*

*Concluding – depths of emotionality.*

## **Competency in coping**

**236**

*Layer three – Coping; pathways defined by Aviles, Anderson and Davila;*

*First pathway – cooperative behaviour*

*Second pathway – peer relationships/adult relationships*

*Third pathway - management of aggression*

*Fourth pathway – self mastery and self worth*

*Fifth pathway – emotional regulation*

*Concluding remarks.*

**Voices, views and visions – a panoramic vista** **263**

*Layer four – forming voice, view and vision; waves of resilience;*

*voice; view; vision; concluding.*

**CODA: reflections and implications** **291**

**REFERENCES** **298**

**APPENDICES** **313**

## **Introduction: unveiling the walls of silence**

### **An overview of the study**

Research around the theme of domestic violence has been focussed upon the effects of domestic violence upon women and children in particular (Mullender 2005; McGee 2000; Hague, Kelly, Malos, Mullender & Debonnaire 1996; Mullender & Morley 1994; Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson 1990), and has primarily remained within the parameters of women's experiences (Walby & Allen 2004; Pickup 2001; Hester, Pearson & Harwin 2007; Weis, Marusza & Fine 1998; Hague, Kelly & Mullender 2001), and the expressions of professional agents and interested authorities (Hague, Malos, Mullender, Kelly & Imam 2002), who have unearthed and analysed data around issues of gender violence, the prevalence of domestic violence and its effects on victims. There is relatively less evidence of research which is centred on direct contact with young people who have experienced domestic violence.

### **Domestic Violence**

The term domestic violence is used to label a particular type of crime which is defined as any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or who have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality (Home Office 2005). It should be pointed out that the views found and expressed within this study are specific to the UK and to North America and need to be considered within this context. The definition of domestic violence given conceals what feminists accurately describe as a crime which is

primarily perpetrated against women. The facts support this view. The 2005 British Crime Survey reveals 28% of women have experienced abuse since the age of 16 (Finney 2006), indicating that at least 1 in 4 women experience some form of domestic violence (Southampton Domestic Violence Forum 2003), and that 80% of the victims of domestic violence are women (Finney 2006).

Bograd (cited by Yllo 1988) states that abuse against women is a part of family life. This has been confirmed by other writers more recently, such as Humphreys & Mullender (2000) and Strega (2004). Pickup (2001) asserts that violence against women forms part of the fabric of human society. Crime Survey Reports support this (Finney 2006; Walby & Allen 2004; Mirrlees-Black 1999). During 2001/2, there were an estimated 635,000 incidents of domestic violence reported to the police (Women's Aid 2002). However, it is accepted that domestic violence is widely unreported (ibid.). It is estimated that only 35% of actual domestic violence incidents are reported to police (ibid.). Women's Aid (2002) maintains that women will suffer abuse on average 35 times before contacting the police.

Yllo (1988) writes that if we are to understand the abuse of women by male intimate partners, there is a need to acknowledge the fundamental roles of gender and power (Mooney 2000). A definition of domestic violence which embodies this idea includes the misuse of power and the exercise of control by one person, usually a man, over another, usually a woman.

The historical context illustrates the use of violence by men as a powerful means of subordinating and controlling women (Pickup 2001; Walker 1992; Dobash & Dobash 1979). Men have benefited if women have been restricted and limited by their fear of violence and abuse. It has been suggested, therefore, that the reality is domination of women by men (Yllo 1988; Mooney 2000). Doggett (1993) describes the historical context as the woman being “under the rod” of the man (Doggett 1993 cited by Pickup 2001). In 1782, Judge Buller was depicted in national newspapers as being an advocate for ‘the rule of thumb’ which stated that a man could chastise his wife with an implement as long as it was no thicker than the man’s thumb. This confirmed the legality of women beating, and men could decide what was reasonable. In 1891, over 8 thousand assaults on women were reported, but only 43 men were imprisoned for 2 or more years. Amongst these assaults were cases of murder. In these cases a manslaughter charge was often brought, indicating an inadequate and prejudicial legal system which was dominated by men (Pickup 2001).

Feminist scholars have demonstrated that the social background associated with violence against women is entrenched in the patriarchal institutions which maintain male dominance over women. Patriarchy is defined as “the extensive and pervasive nature of male dominance which is affecting all areas of women’s lives either directly or indirectly” (Ribbens & Edwards 1998: 100). An illustration of this is given that in 1998, women held only 102 seats in Parliament out of a total of 658. Similarly, women constitute just 2% of the members of the Institute of Directors (ibid: 88).



Pickup (2001) asserts that violence against women has remained unseen, accepted and condoned. The patriarchal social context perpetuates an unequal distribution of power and which results in there being no society where women are secure and treated equally to men (ibid.). The social and personal control resulting from domestic violence against women may reinforce women's passivity and dependence as men exert their rights to authority and control (ibid). It has been suggested that the subservience of women has been socially created through the perpetuation of patriarchal theories of women, such as that societal ills, moral weakness and degradation are all associated with women.

Mooney (2000) describes the opinions of Lombroso (1895) who described women as being defective, immoral, jealous and vengeful. More recently, women victims are seen as neurotic and provocative (Mooney 2000: 46). The criminal nature of domestic violence is now recognised, but there has been a high degree of hesitancy on the part of policing to act upon cases of domestic abuse and assault. Strega (2004) states there is an unwillingness by the courts, police and public "to address the issue of violence within the home" (2004: 29). A number of women are murdered each year by their present or previous intimate male partners. On average, in this country, a woman is murdered every 3 days by a male intimate partner, and a quarter of all murders are the result of domestic violence (Ruddock-Atcherley 2009).

### **The Aims of this Research**

The primary aim of this research is to address an area which has been neglected (Mullender et al. 2002), which is to find out what young people aged between eleven and sixteen think and feel about their experiences of domestic violence.

## **Main Aim**

To collect and critically analyse the stories of young people who have experienced domestic violence with a particular emphasis on expressed ways of coping.

## **Subsidiary Aims**

- To critically analyse the emotional journeys through suffering of each young person.
- To critically assess the supportive power of relationships within the young people's experience which have been seen as empowering.
- To employ autobiographical insights and experiences in the development of the study to critically highlight the inherent reflexivity of the study.
- To analyse and evaluate the coping strategies employed by the young people.

## **Research Questions**

What do individual young people say about their experiences of domestic violence in relation to their ways of coping, their feelings and their understanding of the support which was welcomed by them?

How can the stories of young people contribute to the formulation of policy in relation to domestic violence in a way that their voices can be heard and recognised?

What is the relationship between the stories of the young people and the story of the researcher?

### **Young People's stories**

It is stated that there is an urgent need to know about young people's experiences as they perceive them. The evidence which has been documented already points to young people reacting in individual ways to their experiences of domestic violence and abuse (Mullender 2005; McGee 2000; Hester et al. 2007; Kelly 1994). This is why one of the main aims of this work is to specifically address the particular and personal coping skills and strategies employed by different young people. An analysis of this element of their lives should provide new insights into the way young people see and deal with domestic violence. It will afford a personal view of how the young people see themselves coping or not coping.

The overarching aim of this work is to provide an opportunity for young people to voice whatever they think and feel about domestic violence in their lives. The need for first hand evidence in this context is based on the belief that the voices of the underprivileged, the vulnerable and the disempowered must be heard (Kemshall & Pritchard 2000; Knapp 1995; Attala, Bauza, Pratt & Viera 1995). It is clear that young people who have witnessed domestic violence are disempowered. McGee (2000) outlines young people's feelings of powerlessness. Mullender et al. write: "Very little research to date has been designed with the intention of hearing the voices of children and young people" (2002: 2).

Much of the research which has been carried out points to the harmful and adverse effects of domestic violence upon children and young people (Kelly 1994; Lieberman & Van Horn 1993; Jaffe et al. 1990). Therefore, this research is centred upon the experiences of young people who are vulnerable and disempowered by these effects. An aim is to strengthen and empower them in some measure by giving them a voice (Roberts 2002; Ribbens & Edwards 1998; Ellingson 1998; Epstein & King 1995; Lansdown 1995). Their voices will have precedence and be given priority.

### **Walls of Silence: using autobiography and story**

The walls of silence used in the title of this research are a metaphorical image of the silence which has historically, socially and intimately surrounded domestic violence. Historically, domestic violence has been accepted and hidden (Mooney 2000). Socially, it is acknowledged that reported domestic violence is 'a tip of the iceberg' (Walby & Allen 2004). Intimately, women and children often feel shamed, fearful, stigmatised, guilty and accepting of their experiences, and have remained silent (Weis et al. 1998). Hague & Wilson (1996) describe domestic violence as 'silenced pain'. The question is asked, "Will figures of 'tragic experience' continue to be confined to the dungeons of modern society?" (Miller 1994: 15) and be silenced.

My own story of scaling the wall of domestic violence, of breaking my own silence, is to be reflexively linked to the young people's stories, and this epistemological stance is described in the methodology. Fine (1997) brought to my attention the difficulty of knowing where to situate myself in the text I produce. My story has obvious links with

those of the young people. As I seek to convey direct concern with their experience and mine, there will be a mutual shaping of them and me. There will be a transformation of self, and an emerging understanding of myself and the young people. Alcoff & Potter (1993) suggest that modern philosophy has been committed to epistemological individualism which supports the belief in the individual being the source and principal agent in the production of knowledge. The interpretative process which leads to a form of understanding is characterised by subjectivity, which is changeable, indeterminate, fluid and transitory. Scheurich describes the need for a “comprehensive statement.....so that the reader has some sense of what the researcher brings to the research enterprise” (1997: 74). This would in some measure fill the indeterminate openness and ambiguity of the sharing of stories. My story might in some measure fulfil this need, and provide some structure to research which is constantly shifting.

The significance of my own story became more evident to me as my study developed, and in response I began to consciously look back on my life and felt a strong desire to write autobiographical material in prose and poetry, as the work progressed and as I was prompted to do so. This is reflected in the language used within the writing of this study, in that different tenses are used, depending on the way the study progressed, and how my personal history became integrated into the study. My use of past and present tenses reflects the journey taken as the research unfolded, culminating in the findings which are expressed in the present tense.

Steedman (1992) states that autobiographical writings place the self into her present context and draws on the past to achieve this. Autobiographical stories provide the reader with insights into the transformations of self over time (Foucault 1988). Feminist pedagogy embraces the importance of the individual, the 'self', and "stresses the importance of autobiographical narratives in illuminating the conditions of possibility for the female self....to emerge" (Tamboukou 2003: 32).

There presented a clear need to separate out my voice from others when inclusions of an autobiographical nature required to be dovetailed into my writing. Because these additions required a clear recognition of the source from where they came, a decision was made to identify these entries to clarify their autobiographical source. These insights needed to be expressed in a way which highlighted the interwoven nature of my story with others' stories. There needed to be a clear distinction between the voices. A simple but clear way was to place autobiographical thoughts and feelings as they surface in text boxes and/or in a contrasting font. These methods of representing my autobiography were decided upon. To add to the notion of individuality and personal tone and colour, a different font which is entirely contrasting in character is used, visually differentiating and clarifying autobiographical inclusions.

Walls are constructed for many purposes. Dungeon walls are designed to keep the captive in, whilst a castle wall is constructed to keep invaders out. A wall may be simply an obstacle, something to be got over, under or around. It may form a protective shield, providing shelter and security, or a wall might just be a boundary, forming a border

between one area and another. Clearly the walls of 'a dungeon of modern society' (Miller 1994) are designed to keep the inmates in a state of silence and isolation. The imprisoned are not heard nor seen. They are buried and forgotten. Their lives are captured and frozen in an icy coffin-like structure whose walls prevent the escape of any part of them. What evidence is there to support the idea that victims of domestic abuse are 'figures of tragic experience' who are buried and silenced in dungeons (ibid.)? I shall begin with my own story and that of my son. "I want to understand why and how certain things are silenced" (Boler, 1999: 31).

*The wall of silence which I constructed was for my own protection. I wrongly thought that if no-one knew about my experiences of domestic abuse, then I was safe, and less likely to be further harmed. In the face of tragic experience, the option I chose was to remain silent for fourteen years, locked into a dungeon of my own making. However, there were external influences, which had unconsciously encouraged me to do this, and had added their own building blocks to the wall. I had not heard anything about domestic abuse. I was not aware that what was happening was abuse, and I accepted it. More than that, I took the blame for it, because I was persuaded that what was happening was the consequence of my behaviour. I would have to receive the punishment which was justly meted out in response to my unacceptable behaviour, suffering in silence.*

*In this way, the wall around me was constructed by me for my own protection, but it was founded on a more general, societal disinclination to discuss domestic abuse, and ignorance on my part, of its criminal nature. The wall did not protect me, however. After fourteen years, I had become very ill, very vulnerable and very isolated. I physically escaped but not psychologically and it did not take me long to become embroiled in another abusive relationship. In total, I have had thirty two years of abusive intimate experience and I do not believe that my experience is uncommon.*

Children's inability to take sides springs from emotional ties to both their parents and carers (Strega 2004). They want things to be right with both, and are afraid that if they show a preference for one, their relationship with the other will be threatened, even when abuse has been a pervasive presence within the relationship.

*My son has not spoken explicitly about the abuse. His wall has been built also. Although he experienced extreme emotional abuse, he has always remained loyal to his father, and has never 'spoken out'. Most children who witness violence against their mothers do so in isolation and silence (Epstein & Keep 1995).*

There are other reasons why children do not talk about their experiences (Mullender 2002; Epstein & Keep 1995). Fear, as shown in the example of my son, appearing in many guises, has a large part to play - the fear of making things worse, the fear of upsetting either parent, the fear of being hurt, the fear of what other people might say, the fear of being ignored, the fear of being helpless and unable to make a difference, and finally the fear that there is no-one to whom they can talk (McGee 2000).

With some children, there is a general acceptance that the abuse is a part of life, and that their experiences are no different from other people, so why make anything of it? They believe their lives are just like everyone else's (Kemshall & Pritchard 2000). Other children believe they are to blame for the abuse, and are therefore shamed into silence (McWilliams & McKiernan 1993). If they think they are responsible, then feelings of self loathing and guilt may prevail (McGee 2000). However, it is apparent that the experiences of domestic abuse often have a strong outcome in terms of emotional distress, trauma and insecurity in children that emotional instability, behavioural difficulties, problems associated with relationships, lack of educational progress, lack of confidence, isolation and low self esteem (Hester et al. 2007).



The relevance of my own story is acknowledged and entirely embraced by this research. Few other studies into domestic violence, which combine the story of a researcher who is herself a domestic violence survivor with the stories of other survivors, have been discovered at the time of writing, and there are fewer that are explicit about the researcher's experiences of domestic violence. As a relatively unique research endeavour, a precedent will exist to reflect upon and analyse the philosophical and methodological concerns which are associated with a qualitative study which has been designed by someone steeped in the feelings and thoughts associated with violent experiences.

This reflection and analysis encompasses a desire to expose the dilemmas, the conflicts and the 'shifting sand' which prevails when new ground is being covered and no clear precedent has been set. Assumptions about the researcher's role within this research enterprise, which is founded on an emotional subjectivity born of immersion in painful experiences, will need to be carefully recorded and reflected upon. My desire is to integrate my subjective experience with my critical faculties, to develop an understanding of myself and the young people of this study. This may only be achievable through immersion into the others' lives which involves a subjective imagining of what the others might do, say or act. This may offer access into another's life, and find expression in the nuances of an emotional, lived story (Kiesinger 1998). By drawing on my experience, and the experiences of others, I may come to form an interpretative understanding of experience (Denzin 1989a). Reinharz (1992) insists on the value of subjectivity and personal experience. Blakely (2007) states there have only been a small number of

researchers who have openly admitted that their research affects them on an emotional level. An analysis of the emotional, academic and mental processes emerging from the research endeavour and influencing the researcher and impacting on her story will be necessary.

An aim is to place the researcher's life in the context of the research. The wonderful value and critical worth of collecting personal stories is recognised by this study (Robertson 2003). A story is a broad, constructed narrative which is linguistic in form and which presupposes a narrator and a listener whose different viewpoints affect the way the story is told and interpreted (Greenhalgh 1999; Kiesinger 1998). This interaction between the story teller and the listener forms the ontological perspective of this study which aims to unveil the complexity of people's lives (Greenhalgh 1999). It is characterised by reciprocity, by dependency between researcher and researched, and is a shared story which has an intrinsic capacity to absorb both (Walker 1992). This research aims to offer the reader an opportunity to live through a story, rather than simply gaining knowledge of a story. We interpret the story in a way which is dependent on our own discretion, our meaning making processes, our ways of making sense of it, our experiences and our characters (Denzin 1989). We would present a variety of interpretations of the same story, because the process described above is changeable, transitory, personal and individualistic (Roberts 2002).

This work offers the possibility of developing a deep understanding of personal experiences which, I believe, cannot be reached by any other means.

The intimate knowledge provided by the recounting and recording of stories is valuable, enlightening, powerful and authentic (Bolton 2005). Authenticity which is a characteristic of first hand accounts points to real and personal discourses (Ribbens & Edwards 1998). Denzin & Lincoln describe qualitative research as being characterised by “authenticity, reciprocity and trust” (1998a: 412). In this study, these characteristics are to be sought after, together with credibility and plausibility. As I seek to understand personal experience, the stories shared with me will be framed by these naturalistic elements, providing an authentic gaze into the life of another (Black 1993). An authentic gaze is seen as a view of reality which is closely determined by first hand experience. As a story is told, the close relationship exhibited between the feelings, thoughts and understandings of the person and the lived experience may lead to an undefiled and genuine expression which can be described as authentic. The relevance and meaning of these authoritative expressions to the author cannot always be determined, but their value lies in their worthiness to be believed and their acceptance by others. Authenticity is linked to the expressions of individuals who have lived their lives and have shared their myriad thoughts, ideas, perceptions, emotions, hopes, images and observations, gleaned from their own unique and peculiarly personal experiences. Their testimonies possess a first hand reality, an integrity and trustworthiness which is undeniable (Jessop & Penny 1998).

Their stories unfold, develop, uncover and reveal aspects of their lives which can surface in no other way (Kiesinger 1998). Stories are told by people who by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of their own lives (Denzin & Lincoln 1998c). As a story is told, it contains a fullness and a richness which witnesses to personal and emotional experience

(Etherington 2004). Stories can inspire deeper understanding and connections between those who tell their stories and those who listen (Greenhalgh 1999). This is brought about by the opportunity to reflect upon experience, to question and to ponder, to examine and to respond to another's enquiries (Etherington 2004). There exists the possibility of unravelling the multiple intricacies of everyday lives (Greenhalgh 1999). The analysis will be focussed on the research questions with an understanding that issues around gender will not be examined, because the inquiry will encompass only a small number of young people, and it will not be possible to interpret their stories in relation to issues of gender because of the smallness of the sample.

### **The Research Outline**

The following chapters begin with a literature review entitled 'Searching for other's voices'. There are two parts, the first being an overview of domestic violence, its effects on children and young people, a section on the theme of coping strategies implemented by young people and the theories which have grown up around resilience and social competence. Finally the last section of part one is focussed on talking and listening to children, children's rights and how researchers view the importance of this concept. Part one closes with an autobiographical insert and leads to part two of chapter one which is more subjective in tone. An attempt has been made in this part to examine theories around the causes of gender violence, power, control and resistance, personal, private and public knowledge discourses with specific emphasis upon repressed knowledge and associated emotion. A section dedicated to emotionality, spirituality and suffering then

follows. This part then concludes with an examination of feminist research dilemmas and paradoxes.

Chapter two is entitled 'Gazing at the walls – Methodology'. In part one, the chapter focuses on the hermeneutic methodology adopted and the theoretical implications and assumptions which are encompassed by this approach to research. There is a section which reflects upon the search for meaning required by an interpretative paradigm. The subjectivity of the researcher is discussed, and then the discussion broadens into a reflection upon the wider context of personal and social history. The following section examines interviewing and the methodological issues associated with it. Thoughts and theories around data analysis follow with a final reflection on the ethical considerations which are intrinsic to the methodology. Part two of chapter two is entitled 'The climb begins' and describes the implementation of the research in relation to the interviews conducted with the young people, and how data analysis became concurrent with data collection.

Chapter three is entitled Data Analysis 'Views through a chink in the wall'. This chapter has four sections which examine the voice centred relational method of analysis of each young person's story, the emergent themes centred on emotionality, the competency in coping voiced within the stories and finally, a section which describes the emergence of three final categories of analysis comprising voice, view and vision. At the conclusion of these sections, a coda entitled 'Reflections and implications' completes the study.

Introduction: unveiling the walls of silence

The Walls of Silence are a constant reminder to the reader of the unspeakable nature of domestic violence and the imprisonment which results from domestic violence.

References are made to them in the titles of the chapters and in the developing, open-ended structure of this study.

## **Chapter One Part One**

### **A Literature Review – searching for others' voices**

#### **Domestic Violence**

The prevalence of domestic violence in the United Kingdom involving children and young people has not yet been fully studied. However, the British Crime Surveys do provide some evidence. For example, the BCS of 1998 found that half the women who had reported domestic violence at that time had children under the age of fourteen (Mirrlees & Black 1999). Women's Aid (2002) reported that four out of every six children in this country have witnessed some form of domestic violence. Children who live with domestic violence typically know that it is happening (Mullender 2005). In a study by Mirrlees-Black (1999), 45% of women questioned, who had experienced repeated attacks of domestic violence, stated that their children were aware of the incidents. This confirms the findings of Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson whose Canadian study (1990) showed that children were able to describe the violence in their homes in detail.

It is important to recognise at this stage that domestic violence is a pattern of behaviour which is defined in this study as the emotional, psychological, physical, financial and sexual abuse of a woman and possibly her children by a man who has had previously or is at present in an intimate relationship with her. Abuse is defined as "a pattern of behaviours organised around the intentional use of power, including but not requiring physical violence, by one person (usually a man) for the purpose of controlling another (usually a woman)" (Kemshall & Pritchard 2000: 63).

## **Children, young people and domestic violence**

What children see and hear when their mothers are being abused can not only include physical violence but also emotional abuse and put downs, threats and intimidation, sexual jealousy and sexual abuse. Children may witness the family being kept short of money or the abuser taking money from other family members, and also experience isolation from family and friends (Mullender 2005: 1).

A study by the National Children's Home Action for Children (2002) found that children living with domestic violence frequently experienced direct abuse from the perpetrator, and 10% had witnessed sexual assaults on their mothers. The link between domestic violence and child abuse has been demonstrated in many relevant studies and there is solid evidence to support the "co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse" (NCH 2003: 2). Some statutory authorities maintain that child abuse is an unavoidable consequence when domestic violence is present because witnessing abuse automatically results in emotional trauma. The Adoption and Children Act (2002) states that harm includes any impairment of the child's health or development due to witnessing the ill treatment of another person.

Children and young people are drawn into the abuse. They may want to protect their mothers, and some, particularly girls, try to protect their siblings during the violence and afterwards, seeking to give reassurance and support to them Jaffe et al. (1990). They may risk significant harm as they try to intervene during the violence (Mullender 2005). To escape the violence, families are uprooted and go to refuges or temporary accommodation which is totally unlike anywhere they have lived before (Mullender et al. 2002). In 2003, the Southampton refuges alone housed 133 women



and 170 children (SWA 2004). In the same year, it is estimated that 20,000 women and 30,000 children were accommodated in refuges in England. Every minute a call is received by the police from a woman experiencing domestic violence (Women's Aid 2002). Statistics like these describe the awful prevalence of domestic violence and the serious effects on children.

Escape may take many attempts, and safety is not guaranteed even when it is achieved. It has been found that a woman's safety is significantly lessened once she has left the abuser. The British Medical Association (1998 cited by Women's Aid 2002) found that violence can intensify following separation. Walby & Allen (2004) state that women and children may be assaulted by the abuser after trying to escape. Abuse may continue during contact arrangements; 76% of children who were ordered by the courts to have contact with a violent parent were said to have been further abused as a result of contact being set up (Women's Aid 1999). In this way, contact arrangements can be used by a perpetrator to continue the pattern of harassment and abusive control. Perpetrators may also use contact visits to get back at the mother, using the child 'as a weapon' (Mullender 2005).

The effects of domestic violence or abuse on children have been studied and recorded. McGee (2000) outlines how children are well aware of the violence. Children express feelings of powerlessness, anger and fear. Children are confused about domestic abuse and their self esteem suffers. The overall impact of domestic violence on children has been described using three categories. First, children may display emotional, behavioural and social problems with higher levels of fear, depression, anger, hostility and low self esteem (Wolfe, Zak, Wilson & Jaffe 1986). Second, they

may exhibit cognitive and attitudinal problems with poor school attendance, pro-violence attitudes and lower cognitive functioning, and thirdly, there may be long term problems which surface as adult depression and increased tolerance of violence (Carlson 1990). However, it is important to recognise at this stage, that some children are able to cope with their experiences very well, and show no marked adverse effects.

In those cases investigated by McGee (1997) and Silvern & Kaersvang (1998), the children suffered severe trauma due to witnessing violence and abuse to their mothers. It has been found that exposure to domestic abuse can make children less likely to succeed at school; their school attendance and performance may be adversely affected. Mullender et al. (2002) describe in detail how every child responds uniquely to domestic abuse, but there are patterns which can be discerned. They give examples of emotional distress, adversely affected family relationships, feelings of anxiety, guilt and confusion, helplessness, feeling personally responsible, insecurity and anger. Earlier research by Lieberman & Van Horn (1993) showed that children who had witnessed domestic abuse in their families are both fearful of adult aggression but come to accept it as part of every day life. They may see violence or abuse as an approved method of resolving conflict, and in consequence possess higher levels of aggression, higher anxiety, lower self esteem and more behavioural problems.

Knapp (1998) argues that witnessing domestic abuse may be equally traumatic to being a direct victim of abuse. Kemshall & Pritchard (2000) state that many studies show that abuse observed by children increases the risk that they will react violently later. Further to this, their findings indicate that there is a 100% greater risk of boys

repeating the abuse with their own partners if they have seen their father abuse their mother.

Attala, Bauza, Pratt & Viera (1995) describe a study based on direct work with children which concluded that children from domestic abuse families tend to have more difficulties generally. They are preoccupied with physical aggression; they exhibit behavioural problems and adjustment complications, academic problems, developmental delays, lower social competence and depressive symptoms.

Their imagery and story making is full of violence with power struggles between fearful monsters and their victims. There is a constant repetition in stories and play as the children gain mastery of events in their past" (Kemshall & Pritchard 2000: 65).

Domestic violence perpetrates emotional and psychological abuse of the children who are present in the home. O'Hagan describes the effects of the "blind aggression" (1993: 70) of the perpetrator bringing about the emotions in the children of "fear, terror, anger, sadness, helplessness and pleading... The children's emotional lives become dominated by the anticipation of violence... The children's mental faculties are all adversely affected by witnessing violence against their mother" (ibid: 70-71). He stresses that these effects are supported by the records of the GP, health visitor, social worker and school staff.

A small number of enquiries have been completed directly with children, in response to calls to find ways of investigating their experiences, as the need to empower these children has become a prevailing issue. Abrahams (1994) conducted research with 7 girls aged between 8 and 17 as part of a comprehensive study, which enquired into the experiences and effects of domestic violence on women and children, and found evidence of the negative impact and trauma associated with living with domestic

violence. Childline, (1993/4 cited by Mullender et al 2002) found that 1,554 young people had talked about domestic violence between June 1993 and May 1994. A sample of 126 of these was used for detailed analysis which highlighted that 91% were young women, and that the findings overall illustrated the emotional turmoil caused by domestic violence. McGee (2000) presented the views of young people and included their voices in her analysis of the effects of domestic violence on children and young people. This work clearly reaffirmed the idea that the child's perspective is an essential ingredient in understanding their needs and ascertaining the strategies required to support them (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson 1990). Child protection concerns may be highlighted and initiatives may develop from the views and insights of children. These studies were in part carried out in order to find out what young people were saying, and seeking to empower them.

### **Coping strategies**

Coping for young people refers to "the efforts made to deal with threats and dangers, frustrations and defeats, obstacles, loss, strangeness and the new unknown demands from the adults" (Turner 1980: 106). A person's capacity to cope is determined by their ability to shut out unwanted stimulation and act autonomously (ibid: 107).

Coping strategies may involve avoidant behaviour or distraction orientated activities. Emotional responses may include day dreaming or ruminating or active and diversionary pursuits. The breadth and depth of strategies and responses are remarkable and complex.

Coping with domestic abuse is a process which Campion (1992) describes as unique to each individual child. Yet he does assert that there are certain common

characteristics which revolve around a tendency to be preoccupied with or anxious about certain situations, feelings or experiences. There is a general anxiety about the reliability and availability of the care givers, which leads the child to do the best s/he can without dependable care givers. Every child has a strong will to survive, and this is a powerful motivating force. Campion (1992) writes that this may lead to the development of ways of coping, some of which may not be helpful.

Polin & Roy (1994) carried out research with adults who had suffered abuse as children and described the coping skills used by these survivors. These included dissociation, repression, denial, minimizing, extreme controlling, addictions, isolation, avoiding intimacy, self-injury, running away and rationalisation. Garnezy & Rutter (1983) advocate an external support system which would encourage successful coping with the effects of trauma. Sharp & Cowie state that effective coping by children requires a 'significant other' relationship either within the school or the home. They maintain that the establishment of a strong pastoral system within schools, creating a caring environment, will assist children in coping, and which should be "augmented by peer support networks, cooperation and effective relationship management" (1998: 133).

Coping and resilience are often banded together. Sharp & Cowie (1998) go on to state that social competence is a key to resilience in the face of stress and trauma. Social competence is defined as an interdependent cluster of skills which enable an individual to form positive relationships with others. This is supported by Goleman (1996) who linked social competency and emotional literacy. He writes, "There is a desperate need for lessons (in school) in handling emotions, settling disagreements

peaceably, and just plain getting along” (1996: 231). It is argued that this kind of support will encourage resilience and an increased ability to cope with trauma. Sharp & Cowie (1998) write that children who are more resilient when faced with stress and trauma are those who are socially competent, have effective problem solving skills, are autonomous, and have a sense of purpose and future. These skills can, in their view, comprise coping abilities in themselves.

Sharp & Cowie also describe ‘emotion-focused’ coping which is designed to allow an individual to feel better about a situation even though the situation remains unchanged. “Emotion-focused coping involves changing how you feel or think about a situation” (1998: 139). The strategies may involve a positive affirmation of self, a positive reframing of the situation and/or an appropriate expression of emotion. As these coping skills are learned, a greater resilience to trauma and suffering is the result.

Hague et al. give an outline of their research on children’s coping strategies in relation to domestic abuse which involved in depth interviews with fifty four children. They report that children “are far from passive witnesses of violence. Rather they are social actors in their own lives, often taking responsibility for trying to work out solutions” (2001: 182). It was made clear by Jaffe et al. (1990) that some children do possess a greater capacity to cope with the effects of domestic abuse, and are able to resist its debilitating effects.

This was in some measure examined by Grotberg (1997) who suggests resilience in the face of trauma can be encouraged by supportive interactions with adults which

foster in children feelings of autonomy, personal communication skills and a sense that they are important and will be listened to and respected. Hague et al. (2002) supported this idea as being central to children's abilities and resilience in coping with domestic violence, as they actively and passively dealt with the abuse. They write, "Coping strategies included ...both internalised and externalised mechanisms. General strategies included hiding, crying, cuddling, protecting and reassuring siblings, routinely finding a quiet space especially for themselves" (2002: 181) and significantly talking to a trusted adult or getting help from the police and other agencies. It is clear that the evidence of the involvement of children and young people should result in the belief that the "perspectives and understandings of young people themselves should inform the development of appropriate policy and practice ... for abused women and their children" (ibid: 182).

The development of appropriate support and practice has been studied in relation to current practice. Humpheys (2000) carried out a study to examine the interventions associated with child protection where domestic violence was a known factor. Her findings indicated a lack of awareness amongst some professionals of the effects of domestic violence on women and children, and a lack of recognition that a plan which sought to protect and support the child's mother is also good child protection.

The impact of domestic violence on the emotional state of children and young people has been studied. The overall effects are listed by Hester et al. but include aggression/anger to mother and/or others, feeling guilty and to blame, self blame and bitterness, fear, insecurity and tension, emotional confusion in relation to parents, self harm, sadness and depression, inability to trust others and low self esteem (2007: 63).

A Swedish study cited by Hester et al. (2007) found that young people who had witnessed domestic violence reported having mood swings and eating disorders, and some had attempted suicide. Weinehall (2005) found that the young women in her study were “worried about the possibility of their fathers killing them and the rest of the family” (cited by Hester et al. 2007: 74).

This kind of emotional trauma appears to reflect the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder, which presents itself as “numbness, impaired concentration and memory, hyper-alertness and jumpiness and experiences of ‘flashbacks’ (ibid: 84). “The notion of post-traumatic stress implies that children who chronically witness wife abuse in their homes may display emotional symptomatology at some point in time ...” (Jaffe, Wolfe & Wilson 1990: 72).

Prolonged and regular exposure to domestic violence “can have a serious impact on a child’s development and emotional well being ... children may be greatly distressed by witnessing the physical and emotional suffering of a parent ... it can lead to serious anxiety and distress among children” (Department of Health 1999: 2.21).

Coping emotionally with exposure to violence is an area which Aviles, Anderson & Davila (2006) are particularly focused on. They state, “The emotional climate in the home plays a role in a child’s emotional growth ... where conflict, abuse and stress are present, emotional growth is impaired” (2006: 33). A paper on the assessment of childhood depression by Chrisman, Egger, Compton, Curry & Golston (2006) asserts that it is a reflection of unmet basic dependency needs which present as sadness, disinterestedness, anger, irritability and tearfulness. Children and young people who



have experienced domestic violence variously exhibit aggression, anxiety, withdrawal and unhappiness. Coping depends on a supportive culture (Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, Hibbert & Osborn 2007) which enables young people to express their feelings openly and discuss them positively.

The regulation of emotions in relation to coping strategies has become a particular focus of studies because of the recognition of the need for a deeper understanding of how emotions are changed or controlled. Aviles et al. (2006) outline the construct of 'emotion regulation' and make recommendations for further study.

### **Talking and listening to children and young people**

This research demonstrates the essential principle of talking to children and young people about their experiences. Mullender et al. (2002) write, that at the time of writing, little research had been carried out that had placed the children's perspectives at the heart of the research. Seven years later, there is little evidence to show that this situation has greatly changed. There is, however, a trend towards involving children and young people more directly in research, and this has gained momentum as researchers and writers such as Alderson (2008) have noted that children are responsive, competent and reflective, and their rights and views need to be taken seriously (Mayall 1996). Alderson & Morrow (2004) describe the growth of consultation with children and young people during the 90's, and how their rights and ethical considerations, which are concerned with "respecting research participants" (: 11), need to be constantly considered as a careful balance of attention to "ways to protect children and young people and prevent and reduce harm, with ways to respect and involve them and to avoid silencing and excluding them" (: 135).

There is an urgent need to know more about children's experiences as they perceive them, the impact these have, how children make sense of them, the responses they receive from various agencies, and whether there is any fit between what they the children feel they need and what they get (Mullender et al. 2002: 3).

Research with children and young people involves a crucial need to take them seriously, and to seek to understand them in their own right (ibid.). There needs to be an acknowledgment of children as being social actors in the social contexts of their own lives. There needs to be a total acceptance of the roles children and young people play within our society. This involves conceptualising them as having their own lives, their own concepts, their own use of time and their own activities. Mayall (1996) maintains that children are capable of working to better their world. She does however describe positive dangers such as children being too inexperienced to comment, or they might simply repeat what adults have said.

This has had some bearing on the ages of children involved in research who have been seen as wise, informed and capable of voluntary decisions. For this reason and other ethical reasons, research around the sensitive area of domestic abuse has on the whole been confined to children over the age of 8 (Alderson & Morrow 2004).

Westcott & Davies (1996) offer insight into carrying out research with vulnerable children and young people which is underpinned by the absolute necessity of keeping them safe. They write that there must be a commitment to involve these children in decision making which must go hand in hand with a determination to find ways of communicating that enable them to demonstrate their competence. This would involve offering children and young people a variety of ways of communicating. Additionally, many questions need to be asked and reflected upon such as, 'How can I

make real contact, how can I create a safe place, how can I be sure that I only ask questions of children and young people when it is safe to do so, how can I establish a good relationship, how can I avoid leading the young person and how can I enable the young person to take the lead?’

Childhood and adolescent research requires an emphasis on putting young people at the centre while ensuring they are safe. The researcher's objectives must take second place to the young people's needs and safety. In this way, research needs to acknowledge the dilemma surrounding power and ownership within the research process (Ribbens & Edwards 1998). In relation to children, there are issues around who is controlling the research, who actually benefits and how does empowerment or conversely oppression figure in the methodology (ibid.)? Themes of an ethical nature in relation to research practice are closely examined in the methodology of this research.

We do need “different ears to hear those who speak with a different voice” (Simons & Usher 2000: 183). Talking and being listened to are recurring themes of children and young people who had responded in a positive way to questions around what had helped them and provided support in the face of their experiences of domestic abuse. They valued highly the opportunities given them to talk about their lives. McGee (2000) found that children feel very strongly about the violence in their lives, and say that they want to talk to other children who have had similar experiences. They also want to talk about the violence because it helps them to make sense of it. A young person stressed the importance of this contact and opportunity for communication.

When asked what s/he would want to happen, s/he said, “Just to talk to us, to get people to go out and talk to children in their houses and their schools” (McGee 2000 : 225). Communication is also stressed by a 14 year old interviewed by Hague et al. who said: “Tell someone. The adults should deal with it, not you ... Get stronger, you can do it; that’s what I want you to tell other young people” (2002: 182).

However, not enough research up until now has been carried out to find out what children think and feel. Mullender et al. (2002) state that young people themselves, those who have lived with domestic abuse going on around them, are not being listened to and their own understandings of their lives are being overlooked, as are the ways they attempt to deal with it. The crucial importance of involving and consulting with children and young people is highlighted in the words of an adult who had grown up with domestic abuse. He states, “There is a pressing need to break the years of enforced silence, to speak out, to describe and make sense of my own experience of living with and growing up in an environment of violence directed against my mother. This opportunity never arose” (Epstein & Keep 1995: 15).

The importance of breaking the silence around domestic violence coupled with the need for the development of children and young people’s personal autonomy is reflected in the work carried out by Grover (2004) who writes that children who are given advocacy are able to demonstrate a greater potential to cope with adversity and have a clearer vision of their self worth. Advocacy is here represented as opportunities and power offered or given to individuals allowing them to play an incisive part in decision making which has some bearing on their lives. In this example, young people can be advanced into positions of authority, which allow them

to represent the views, wishes and ideas of other young people as well as their own. Some children may need to be supported in this area, whilst others may need to be taught self advocacy skills. There needs to be “a recognition of the role of children and young people in the enterprise of securing a better future for themselves” (Grover 2005: 536).

The importance of talking to children and young people who have experienced domestic violence is stressed by Hester et al. (2007: 216) but needs to be considered in the light of possible constraints such as a fear of the consequences of talking to someone about their experiences. Children and young people may be afraid for their parents or they may have kept the ‘family secret’ from others (ibid: 216). As we consider the injunction of The Children Act 1989 that the child’s welfare should be paramount, the welfare checklist must begin with “the ascertainable wishes and feelings of the child concerned” (Strega 2004: 118). With this in mind, open and sensitive communication with children and young people must be part of good practice, enabling the possibility of overriding misconceptions held by them that they are in some way to blame for the violence, or that they have viewed the violence as acceptable or that their mothers are in some way to blame (Hester et al. 2007: 216).

Talking with children and young people individually might include “a consideration of basic safety needs, an exploration of some of the confusion and ambivalent feelings the violence has evoked, and ensuring the children learn to understand that they are not responsible for the violence” (ibid: 217). Long term interventions may be needed “in order to help children make sense of their experiences and understand the impact they have on them” (ibid: 197).

Talking and listening to and supporting children and young people who have experienced domestic violence must be based on their needs. Where their needs cannot be met within a universal service such as a Children's Centre or at school, there needs to be a provision of a specialised support service. Where children and young people's lives have been seriously disrupted by domestic violence, they should "have access to: individual support, advocacy and counselling with skilled practitioners knowledgeable about domestic violence" (Hester et al. 2007: 197).

In conclusion, in research such as this, it would be necessary to ensure that the children and young people involved receive ongoing access to this kind of support, to ensure their welfare remains paramount.

### **Children's needs and rights**

Listening to children and young people is listed as one of their basic needs under the heading of 'Love, affection and respect' (Sharp & Cowie 1998). Along with this their needs include being taken seriously and being encouraged to share feelings, including those that express anger, bewilderment and hurt. These are related to children's need for respect and closeness which should initially be found within the family. A second area of need is centred upon the need for security, support and control. Their lives need to be bounded by consistency and clear guidance in a stable family. "Children and young people need to gain the experience of taking responsibility for themselves and others" (ibid: 3) and gain a sense of personal autonomy. More obvious needs are the need for basic physical care, including being kept clean, warm, sheltered and fed (Fottrell 2000). Finally, and perhaps most relevant within the context of this research, children and young people need to be

protected from harm, from physical abuse and violence, and sexual abuse (John 1997).

The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991) was a world wide initiative to advance the rights of children internationally. The rights outlined were both protective and provisory. Clearly, the intentions were to mainstream children's rights, to encourage a fuller engagement in children's rights and to express a child-centred perspective. The message to all is that every child has the right to life, and to a reasonable quality of life. The Convention was ratified, but only binding upon the signatories. However, most children's organisations in the UK do possess policies in relation to the UNCRC and seek to implement its recommendations. There is a general consensus of appreciation of the spirit contained within it. However, there has been a politically motivated mutism surrounding children (Fottrell 2000), as children have continued to suffer violation of their rights, and the means to impose the Convention have not always been available.

In the specific area of violence in the home, there has been silence for many years on the implications for children, from children themselves. Children have had little opportunity to make their experiences known, and have been powerless in relation to expressing their views, ideas, opinions, feelings and understandings of domestic violence. With a history of non-consultation and participation of children in the decisions which affect all aspects of their lives, there come certain consequences. "Agencies and professionals are stumbling in uncharted territory in attempting to give voice to young people where this has not been part of a wider societal culture" (Lansdown 1994: 40).

The implications of implementing the Convention's recommendations are far reaching and complex. There is a need to acknowledge children's experiences, to allow direct work with children, to consider the best interests of children at every point along the way, to take children seriously, to allow that children are competent and rational and have something very important to say and contribute. Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child outlines the child's right to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation (UN 1991). The Convention also emphasises listening to the views of the child, and emphasises their right to participation in processes which impact on them directly. In some schools efforts have been directed towards facilitating the process of democratic participation (Sharp & Cowie 1998). In recent years there have been many attempts at involving children and young people more directly in research. However, "for many, childhood continues to be characterised by low status, little power and almost no control over the outcomes of their lives" (CRDU 1994 :xiv cited by Sharp & Cowie 1998: 6).



*The story of Rapunzel has always fascinated me because it is such a strange tale; but it possesses a resonance with my own life which entices me to reflect on it. It tells of a young woman living at the top of a high stone tower. The only way that anyone can reach her is by climbing up her long hair, which she has to let fall out of her window. There seems to be no escape for her, but that does not seem to matter, surprisingly. What matters is that she is safe and in control of her life, and need not let anyone see or hear or experience her in any way excepting she allows it. This control is born out of the life which has been created for her and which she has accepted for herself, and is total. She alone possesses the ability to physically allow contact between herself and others.*

*When I began to read about what everyone else had to say about the themes of my research, and about the domestic violence I knew so well, I separated myself from it, and wanted to put controls upon what I was reading, and interpret it and make it out to be clinical and sterile, expressed in impersonal, unemotional language. Unconsciously, I had estranged myself from those who were speaking to me. I had set myself apart, distancing myself from those I had approached and from those who wanted to approach me. I remained safe, high in my tower, behind its all encompassing walls, and did not feel the need to 'let down my hair'. Now a year later, I feel differently about everything. I have begun my own story, and this casts a ray of light on those who are calling to me, "Sue, let down your hair". I can hear them and I can see them more clearly now, and I realise that in my tower I was not able to see or reach anyone beyond my own experience, because it had been necessary for me to be separate for a time. The safe feeling I had needed more than any other, had given way to an earnest desire to touch other people's hearts and minds, and a new found courage which would carry me beyond my tower. The record that precedes this is the 'safe' me in the tower. It remains because it reflects my isolation and emotional sterility brought about by domestic violence. The second part of this Rapunzel is not, as in the story, her letting down her hair, allowing the caller to climb and enter her world. Rather it is a braver Rapunzel, or I like to think it is, who comes down from her tower, from behind its walls, and steps out to greet those who have come to visit with her.*

## **Chapter One Part Two**

### **Causes of gender violence**

I begin with a quote from Dobash & Dobash in Pahl (1985) which outlines the underlying basis of male violence directed at women. They unequivocally affirm, “We propose that the correct interpretation of violence between husbands and wives conceptualises such violence as the extension of the domination and control of husbands over wives” (1985: 15). The focus of their writing was determined by research into marital relationships, but there is evidence to support that what they were saying then, is easily applicable to all intimate relationships between men and women where domestic violence is present. Abrahams (1994) showed in response to a national survey that between 90 and 97% of domestic violence is perpetrated by men on women.

A national snapshot survey in 2000 of calls to the police reporting domestic violence found that 81% of the callers were women. Walby & Allen write, “Women are the overwhelming majority of the most heavily abused group” basing their findings on the 2001 British Crime Survey (2004: vii). Mooney reflects this by stating, “Male violence is the basis of men’s control over women” (2000: 89) and this is at the root of gender violence. The central theme of control, which is exhibited through various private behaviours, is at the core of domestic abuse and violence. However, I regard it as necessary to broaden private behaviours beyond to the public sphere and agree with feminist theory which has challenged the traditional division between the private and the public.

Historically, within our own culture, the public view of the relative positions of power and control of men and women has undergone change. In recent times patriarchal values and laws have held precedent. A definition of patriarchy can be found in the Introduction of this study. The patriarchal laws are centred on the dominant political and social position of men, which in turn supports the patriarchal position of women as being inferior. Boler writes of the way social controls have been established around who has the power, who is dominant and who is subordinate. “Religious, scientific and rational discourses have ‘controlled’ women’s emotions and relation to knowledge as a strategy to maintain her subordinate status within a patriarchal culture” (2000: 32).

The controlling influences of a patriarchal society are focussed on ‘the emotional nature of women’ and therefore their inferiority. She goes on to conclude, “Patriarchal law constructs women as being irrational, and then makes her a clown because of her emotionality” (Boler 2000: 41). Women may participate in their own subjugation as they often reinforce the need to control emotions and accept the position imposed on them to enforce patriarchal values and laws within the home. Girls may be taught to take responsibility for all society’s ills. Social ills are often seen as women’s fault. Crime, poverty, badly run homes and misery may all be a result of women’s lack of masculine virtue (Boler 2000). Westkott (1979) wrote that women emerge as “partial man, or a negative image of man, or the convenient object of man’s needs” (1979: 423), when they have been considered in traditional discourses. Feminist views developed from an awareness to overcome the subordination and devaluation of women (ibid.: 427).

The gender view of domestic violence has received some resistance. A Social worker said: "On nearly every occasion... talking with people in the [local] authority, when the emphasis of my discussion would be around violence of men towards women and children, somebody will say, "What about women? Women are violent too" ...there continues to be a resistance, I think, to confront the issue that it is actually mostly men" (Strega 2004: 143). However, there are political signs of change as a Government Consultation around Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG 2009) seeks to challenge attitudes which do not acknowledge the existence of gender violence (Home Office 2009).

Women victims of domestic violence and abuse suffer physical, emotional and psychological effects. The emotional and psychological effects of abuse "can be more difficult to overcome and have a long lasting impact (Hester et al. 2007: 248).

*As I have reflected on this, it became evident to me that self blame for a miserable situation had been, and still tends to be my understanding of situations which I found myself in. In relation to domestic violence and abuse, I have been saturated with feelings of guilt, and for years accepted that the abuse was my fault. As I have struggled to maintain a job, my emotional state would impinge on my ability to fulfil my responsibilities in all aspects of my life. Although a qualified and experienced teacher, I thankfully accepted cleaning work, as this was all I could see myself managing. As the years of abuse continued, my own emotional sense became impaired as I felt I could no longer be trusted to do anything. My sense of my own value had been totally dispelled by the torture of abuse. Sept 2007*

## **Power**

The threat and fear of violence becomes a social control mechanism, which controls women's activities and resultantly oppresses them. This cruel grip of power is described by Foucault. Miller describes how Foucault sees people as vehicles of

power, who exercise it within relationships thoughtfully or wantonly. He describes allegories of endless domination, “from the hangman torturing the murderer to the doctor locking up a deviant” (1994: 15). Power may find expression in cruelty and torture. Resistance can come in the form of silence. However, Foucault did not accept the totally repressive nature of power. He stated that power is exercised only over free subjects and only in as far as they are free. In this way, he argued that power can both produce and repress (Miller 1994). It builds and works by means of itself, and it comes from everywhere (ibid.). Considering this in relation to abusive relationships, for those who seek control, there would be no need to use abuse if the victim was subservient to the degree that she demonstrated no sense of autonomy.

Abuse as a demonstration of power and control over another, would not be required for there would be no need for it. It is the view of this research that abuse is used primarily to control and remove another's freedom (Macdonell 1986). Wilson, Daly & Wright (1993) state, “Fatal and non-fatal violence towards women are cross-culturally ubiquitous outcomes of marital conflict over female autonomy” (cited by Strega 2004: 13).

Mills affirms, “Power is a form of action and reaction between people which is negotiated in each interaction and is never fixed and stable” (1997: 39). The exercise of power and its relational elements depend on what Foucault describes as its ability to hide itself. Its success relies upon and is proportional to this ability.

A revealing example of this may perhaps lie in the statistical findings gathered around abusive men who contest child custody. Zorza (1995) writes that fathers who are

abusive are more likely to contest custody and not pay child maintenance. If a woman is identified as a victim of domestic abuse, it may well reflect more badly on her than on her abuser. Mahoney (1991) gives the outcomes of two studies which showed that 59% and 40% of violent men were granted custody when they applied for it.

Schneider (2000) has revealed several US cases when a father's violence against the mother has been deemed irrelevant in child custody cases, and also a number of cases where the men had killed the children's mother and were awarded custody. The woman's failure to protect her children has been seen as worthy of greater attention than the abusive behaviour of the perpetrator. This is reflected in the fact that leaving a violent relationship may increase the likelihood that a mother will lose her children, and being identified as being a victim of violence may sometimes reflect more badly on her in custody cases than on her abuser (Strega 2004: 13).

*In 1985, I was faced with a custody suit pressed by my ex husband. In court I was forbidden from bringing my ex husband's abuse to myself and to our son into the public domain of the court. I was advised that if I was to indulge in what was called at the time as 'mud slinging' it would reflect badly on me. I remained silent. I was questioned as to my suitability and ability to be a good mother to my son. I felt degraded and humiliated. My ex husband did not have to face such an unrelenting attempt to discredit him. The judge could not make up his mind. He said he needed time to reflect. My solicitor told me it was a close thing.*

*I had been bringing my son up on my own for over a year, and had not received any financial support from his father for my son. Both my son and I had been so seriously abused that we had both had to receive medical attention for illnesses associated with post traumatic stress syndrome. I was faced with the possibility of a legal judgement that would put my son back with his and my abuser, and there was nothing I could do about it. . October 2007*

Another relevant aspect of Foucault's thinking in relation to power lies in his assertion that power and knowledge are intimately related. "Power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and

constitute at the same time power relations” (cited by Usher & Edwards 1994: 87). Knowledge is enmeshed in power, and Foucault expresses this as power- knowledge (Macdonell 1986). He states that the will to truth finds expression in a will-to-power. In this way, power produces reality, it produces ‘rituals of truth’ (Merquior 1985). Power interrogates to produce truth, and it may not be exercised without knowledge, for they depend on one another (Foucault 1977).

As I have read the words of others on the subject of domestic violence, I have recognised the ‘truth’ of what has been written, through an intimate knowledge brought about by experience. The power contained within the actions of other writers finds expression in their words and in my positive response to them (Rabinow 1986). Paradoxically, it is subjective and objective, reflexive and impersonal. In contrast, the knowledge which is sublimated and marginalised and taken less seriously finds little expression and acceptance and is not recognised as true (Miller 1993). Foucault supported the “resuscitation of subjugated knowledges” (McHaul & Grace 1993: 16), and recognised the feminist movement as seeking to critically challenge the theories and assumptions of accepted research methods, and supported their effort to present alternative ways of acquiring knowledge (Miller 1994).

Feminist research aimed to critically re-examine socially constructed ideas of just what constituted academic scholarship (Ribbens & Edwards 1998). For women, this process was crucial to the process of empowering, thereby challenging the patriarchal epistemological foundations of academia (Holland et al. 1995). This demonstrates Foucault’s submission that power cannot be exercised without knowledge. The feminist challenge to the traditional public bodies of knowledge which supported a

privileged minority of specialists (Shumway 1992) was a part of the struggle to find and express more private ways of being (Ribbens & Edwards 1998). Difficulties were apparent in being able to hear the personal voice amongst the multitude. How is it possible to hear the muted voices of those who were not part of the dominant discourses of the public domain? Macdonell (1986) raises the idea expressed by Deleuze (1977) in answer to this question by quoting, "Only those directly concerned can speak in a practical way on others' behalf" (1986: 16). The close association between those who speak for others and those for whom they speak, supports a wider and more comprehensive view of valid discourse, which encompasses a connection (McHaul & Grace 1993). This challenges the power of established institutions and points to more private ways of knowing (Ribbens & Edwards 1998).

### **Personal, private and public knowledges**

Bringing a personal account, which enshrines the sense of self in intimate terms, into public view does present many dilemmas for the researcher. The personal is associated with private ways of being, with emotions. There is a need to let go of established academic bodies of knowledge. However, there is a need to be accepted by others, but without in any way, undermining or contaminating the concern to represent others' unrepresented voices. Ribbens & Edwards (1998) state that there is a danger that if researchers cling to the accepted ways of knowing, they run the risk of silencing intimate ways of knowing.

### **Voice**

The feminist principle of representing the voices of the researched, and also the voice of the researcher does present dilemmas. Ribbens (1998) examines the struggles



associated with the vocalization of her own 'feeling voice' as she worked on a study of motherhood. As she reflected on her own experiences, she concluded that her own feelings possessed no form or shape until they were articulated and voiced. They had no socially meaningful reality. The management and subversion of her feeling voice had resulted in a sense of loss of power and agency in her life. As she recognised her own feeling voice more consistently, she noticed a parallel feeling of greater empowerment. She had sought to locate herself in the process of her research. By so doing, she became aware of changes associated with her own position of power within the research process, and recognised the dilemma of doing this and risking the muting of others' voices. The struggles that inevitably accompany this kind of research support Foucault's assertion that knowledge is determined in its forms and domains by the "struggles that traverse it" (1977: 28).

Voicing the private may be easy or difficult. Some may be reluctant to express emotional aspects of intimate relationships. Vulnerability may surface. Some may wish to disclose experiences of a traumatic nature. The emotional-power relations between the researcher and researched are crucial to creating a space which allows the voicing of the private and personal (Ribbens 1998).

*I can identify with the idea that the only way I could resist what was happening was to never speak of it. The shame and guilt which I felt silenced me, and as long as I never spoke of it, the abuse was buried and remained unseen. I could not define myself in relation to the abuse, because it was too destructive; I could not define myself in terms of the perpetrator of the violence, because again it would have undermined me even more. So by being silent, the reality of what was happening lost some of its impact and a vestige of my own value remained.*

When power is abused or corrupted it leads to oppression and maltreatment. It leads

to a smothering of a person's voice. Etherington (2004) writes there is a need to challenge the idea that terrible events are too awful to be told. I wonder if it is possible to attack the social stigma and shame attached to abuse by research such as this.

“There must be freedom if we are to speak  
And yes, there must be power, if we are to be heard.  
We seek only to give words  
To those who cannot speak” (Anasuya Senupta cited by Taylor et al. 1995).

### **Repressed knowledge and emotion**

Power embodied in social and cultural pressure is the means by which women have been controlled and regulated. Foucault's concept of disciplinary power provides an understanding of what constitutes repressed discourses and knowledge (Merquior 1985). He argued it is possible to have an experience without the knowledge, which prevents the development of a discourse. As the voices of the oppressed are repressed, so knowledge is repressed. His concern was with these repressed voices and knowledge, and with “the existence and voices of those who are silenced and subordinated by, or excluded from dominant discourses” (Ramazanoglu 1993: 74).

An interesting development since Foucault has occurred through feminist theory which argues it is possible to have a feeling without a discourse (ibid.). Clinging to feelings enables the exploration of the unspeakable. Feelings are not impossible and provide the opportunity for personal expressions of the richest kind (Boler 1999). As repressed voices and knowledge surface through the emotional outpourings of victims of domestic violence, there is hope that “the explicit discourse of emotions will lead us to develop a meta-discourse about the significance of different emotional expressions, silences or rules in relation to the power relations that define cultural

injustices” (Boler 1999: 82). Being ensnared by abusive power does not have to remain without challenge.

Boler (1999) issues another warning to those whose voice is powerful enough to silence, shame or humiliate; it may drown out other voices and it may make others feel a loss of their own power. She stresses the absolute necessity of recognising power relations by acknowledging that others are different from us and not like us in important ways. If I have suffered as another person has suffered, there is empathy but I must recognise the dangers of silencing the diversity of experience, and be critically sensitive to the ethical dimensions of the research (Seale 1999).

*My way of challenging the ensnarement of abusive power in the courtroom, when my son was so nearly taken from me, has been created in part through the discourses which have burst out of the research boundaries and traditional epistemologies set by scientific enquiries, and have found expression in qualitative, feminist ideographical discourses. This work is a form of resistance to the treatment of that court and would not have been possible without the encouragement of those who value my marginalised voice.*

### **Feeling voices**

The emotional component of abusive experience involves the growing awareness of an entanglement of inner, hidden feelings with the outward expression of others associated with suffering. Data analysis may include interpretations around emotions, categories of emotions, theories of emotions and the connections which other researchers have made between emotions and other aspects of experience. It is necessary to define emotions in relation to this research, to categorise them in some way that a means might be found to interpret and to understand “feeling voices” (Ribbens 1998).

Burman (2009) and Zembylas (2007) stress a growth of interest in emotions and the enhanced importance attributed to them in research during recent years. "Emotions are increasingly the focus of analysis across a number of disciplines ... including education" (Zembylas 2007: 444). Specifically, one focus has been on how emotions and affects influence educational experience (ibid: 445). Consideration has also been given to the variations associated with the embodiment of emotions, through cultural experiences and social interpretations (ibid: 446). Experiencing emotional experiences which are constructive is a theme which Radford (2007) explores. "We need to escape the anxieties and tensions of existence" (Radford 2007: 24). Radford inquires into how young people make sense of their feelings and experiences, and how they come to understand "the more traumatic experiences that life presents to us" (2007: 24).

Pugmire writes that emotions are distinct, but are dependent upon individualistic judgements. "Hate can realise itself variously in elation, dejection, anxiousness or spite" (1998: 12). Those emotions which are judged as being generally non productive, having a negative effect upon the individual and her relationships are seen by Geen (1990) as learnt from experience and the example of others, and are dependent on motivation. These motivations vary in power and influence, resulting in a wide range of behaviours which in the case of aggression may emerge as physical violence, self injury, emotional bullying, psychological torture or controlling, disempowering behaviour.

Oakley & Jenkins (1997) describe and evaluate the process of making sense of emotions combined with the range of effects. As emotional habits are formed, people

“construct and inhabit a kind of inner theory which makes sense of what happens to us and informs us about what to do” (Oakley & Jenkins 1997: 362). Suffering produces inner theories which are perpetuated by abuse and which remain beyond the conclusion of the abuse. Ridgway (1973) explains this through a belief that the unique self is found through the violence because the sense of personal identity and existence has become dependant upon the abuse (Ridgway 1973: 19). This assumption leads to thoughts relating to the growing up environments of children. “Most important of all is that young people should live in an environment where there is no fear” (ibid: 43).

The witnessing of scenes of suffering appears to foster a vast collection of emotions, which are complex, deep, multi-layered and individualistic. It appears that all kinds of experience are remembered emotionally. Ribbens (1998) does however highlight a particular dilemma surrounding the location and expression of her own ‘feeling voice’ when she refers to the struggles which inevitably attend the hearing of a voice which innately embodies more private ways of being. She expresses delight in the empowerment which she found attended her when she achieved a consistent awareness and recognition of her own feeling voice.

The crucial element for her remained the articulation of her feeling voice, for she recognised that it possessed no power, no shape or form, no socially meaningful reality until it had been voiced. The management and subversion of feeling voices results in a loss of power and individual agency. Her argument rests on the need to find new ways of defining our identity as researchers and as individuals and challenge, transform or modify dominant patriarchal forms of discourse. There is an

obligation to explore largely hidden and subordinated ways of being, to find expression through sensitive means. To interpret these private ways of being into academic discourses in the public domain presents perhaps the greatest challenge. It requires that there should be a letting go of established academic bodies of knowledge. If not, the more intimate ways of knowing, including 'the feeling voice', will be silenced.

Memories are attached to feelings, which may or may not resurface when reflection takes place. The stories of young people who have witnessed domestic violence and abuse contain elements of extraordinary emotional intensity and power, which demand a critical reflection of the constituents of their feeling voices, their parameters and dimensions, as they are revealed in the telling of their stories.

Emotionality exists as a form of consciousness, which contains social and cognitive factors. There is a diversity of responses to it within the academic world. However, the links between thinking and feeling processes are evident, and are generally accepted, with the wide recognition that they are dependent on social relationships. Goleman (1996) refers to 'Emotional Intelligence' as a reflection of his conviction that mind and heart should be brought together in the classroom. He argues that knowing one's emotions leads to self awareness and self control, and ultimately results in improved relationships.

This knowledge leads to the development of the skill of handling emotions in oneself and also allows the possibility of managing emotions in others. The imposition of controlling forces upon emotions of self and others seems to point to the possibility of

a subversive reaction to some emotions which are seen as unattractive within dominant social discourses. However, Goleman (1996) describes the processes involved in skill acquisition as 'impulse control' or 'social competency', which requires the overcoming of emotional impulses and the improving of social skills.

The rules which govern these processes would need to be reflected upon and evaluated so as to avoid the dangers of simply seeking behavioural modifications or apportioning blame to those who 'lack' control or skills. The point of this reservation lies in the belief that all emotions can be voiced and need not be modified or eradicated because of social pressures and demands (Boler 1999).

### **Emotionality analysis**

The understanding of inner emotionality, in terms of an analysis and interpretation of data which conceals or reveals feeling voices, is an aim of this study. Social acceptability and rejection of emotional expressions in individuals would not be considered, nor would it be allowed to interfere with the interpretive process (Denzin 1989). Strongman (1996) defines the view of Denzin (1984) as a phenomenological perspective of emotion, which is lived and experienced. This way of viewing emotion echoes the view accepted and embraced here. Emotion may originate in the outer world but it always refers back to the self. "Emotion is self-feeling" (Strongman 1996: 25). However, the dependence upon the outer world is personalised, because the relationship between the self and what exists outside the self, rests on an intimate view or belief about what constitutes the outer world.

"Different types of appraisal lead to different kinds of emotions; that is, it is not the external object *per se* that is important, but my belief about that object" (Power & Dalglish 1997: 7).

This association of mind and emotion exists at the centre of a large number of theoretical discussions. "Theories of emotion are almost always sub-texts of much larger theories of the mind" (ibid: 17). However, it is the purpose here to define emotionality in terms of personal and private experiences, as experiences of subjective feelings which people describe as emotional. It is characterised by a range of experiences. Emotionality provides a rich and revealing dimension to people's lives which often appears to be more valid than rationality.

The range and variety of emotions is hard to define, because of individualistic perceptions and understandings. William James (1890) described this. 'The limit to their number would lie in the introspective vocabulary of the seeker'. This also raises questions about how to recognise relationships between emotions, how they might overlap or intertwine, and how they interact one with another.

It is therefore an assumption of this enquiry that emotions may be isolated for the purpose of analysis, in order to accomplish a view or perspective of any signs of commonality or difference within the stories. The 'feeling voices' of the young people exhibit a myriad of emotions, but there is a point when a name might be given to a particular emotion (Boler 1999; Goldstein & Keller 1987; Jessey 1978). The registering of particular emotions and the recognition of them depends on our own subjectivity and experience. I acknowledge that this may be particularly true in relation to my analysis of emotionality.



## **Emotions, Spirituality and Suffering**

Dorr (1990), Israel (1995), Swinton (2001), Gottlieb (2003) and Robinson (2008) write making connections and describe impressions which link emotionality with spirituality. Dorr describes spirituality as the “unfolding of the deepest dimensions of everything I do or say or feel” (1990: 272). Israel quotes Alexander Pope when he ponders the most intimate of inner feelings. “Hope springs eternal in the human breast. Man never is, but always to be blest” (1995: 55).

The recognition of the human and sublime qualities which can overcome despondency and emotional darkness is based upon a belief in a spirituality which grows out of the individual person “from an inward source, (which) is intensely intimate and transformative, and is not imposed upon the person by an outside authority” (Tacey 2004: 8). The transformative power and willingness to change Gottlieb (2003) defines as a spirituality of resistance which is the result of the distressing tensions of everyday life.

The emotional pull of injustice and suffering may lead to more pain. “It is hard to be serene when responding to unjust suffering” (Gottlieb 2003: 13). There is a part which wants to cultivate a forgiving heart, but there is a part that does not know how to let go of anger. There is a part that tries to accept things as they are and there is a part that cannot affirm a world which contains so much injustice and pain (Gottlieb 2003: 6). “To find peace we need to actively resist that which we know to be evil or destructively ignorant” (ibid: 13).

The connections between emotions, spirituality and suffering appear strong and convincing. Dorr (1990) also writes of a need to challenge injustice and oppression brought about by a keen sense of unjustly inflicted suffering which is born of a spirituality based on integrity and a deeply abiding hope. Feelings of peace and well being result, which Dorr (1990) describes as a 'victory'. Robinson (2008) writes that suffering is an inevitable and profound part of our lives. A connection is made between the possibility of transcending suffering and locking into a higher sense of identity (Robinson 2008). As feelings are acknowledged and validated, peace and a sense of wholeness alongside a sense of justice occur. A creative transformation exists (Robinson 2008: 185). Spirituality in this way requires effort, "which makes our lives arise anew with its sufferings, violence and pain, and transforms it" (Mananzan, Oduyoye, Tamez, Clarkson, Grey & Russell 1996: 153).

The interlocking of emotions and spirituality is highlighted by Erricker & Erricker (1997) within a developmental study of Emotional Literacy within Education. The power of reflection and learning to understand ourselves stretches us to a better understanding of feelings, experiences, relationships and our sense of connection with something or somebody beyond ourselves. We are encouraged "to see beyond the literal world of things or appearances as they present themselves to us and see how these are an expression of a making sense of the world" (Erricker & Erricker 1997: 11). Through the telling of our stories we are able to see how unconsciously we use "story, symbol and ritual in our own lives whatever age we are" (ibid: 11).

The spiritual dimension which Tacey (2004) describes as a journey into hidden depths and self knowledge, gives lives meaning and direction (ibid: 65), and encompasses “a respect for mystery” which is “paramount” (ibid: 8).

Park (1999) elaborates further as emotions are linked to spirituality by adding, there is a need to “enable children to work with feelings that trouble them and those that inspire them, to help them make creative use of their learning and evolve ways to map out a multi-dimensional future for themselves” (Park 1999: 19). The widening of opportunities for children through “a search for a new kind of vision” (Tacey 2004: 55) clearly has increased the potential for transformation and growth.

Hopefulness, peacefulness and compassion are spiritual and emotional expressions (Fox 1990; Brueggemann 2000; Berlant 2004; Robinson 2008). Aggression, despair, fear and guilt present as the antithesis of these other voices but find expression in complex ways (McKeating 1970; Rachman 1998; Rentrew 1997; Geen 1990). Krahe writes that aggression in particular is more prevalent in children and young people who have been exposed to abuse and neglect (2001: 54). Higher levels of hate, resentment and revenge are also more active at times of vulnerability (Varma 1993: 1) which may be described as times of general deprivation or loss. The communication of these feelings is presented in complex and strategic ways. In a general sense, “The (abused) child may find it difficult to distinguish and express appropriate emotions” (Crompton 1998: 144).

Crompton (1998) stresses the importance of caring for the ‘whole’ child, with reminders of the crucial part to be played by adhering to the child’s right to respect.

She writes, "Abuse in any form detracts from spiritual well-being ... spiritual strength can result from abuse, as when children receive acceptance and love ... which help them grow away from the sense of guilt, shame and unworthiness" (1998: 155). The emotional and spiritual journey becomes entangled and concomitant. The connections and ambiguities emerge resulting in a more obvious desire to examine emotions with a spiritual lens. This focus is prevalent in relation to 'feeling voices'.

Plaskow & Christ write: "Pursuing our work and writing has been a matter of finding our own voices and our own power, discoveries that have often brought changes in our lives" (1989: vi). As they sought to examine spirituality in feminist ways they were faced with academic struggles and opposition. This has relevance because I could see that the stories of the young people steeped in abuse would be interpreted by me in a deeply personal way. As a victim of domestic violence I am seeking to find my own voice and power, and in particular my own spiritual and feeling voice, as an attempt to 'grow away' from feelings of shame, guilt and depression resulting from domestic violence, and bring change to my life.

Mananzan et al. call for this kind of interpretative, spiritual endeavour and struggle because it denotes "a type of optimism in the face of suffering" (1996: 142). This upholds the essence of what it means to remember the spiritual which is "to attempt to grow in sensitivity to self, to others, to non-human creation and to God who is within and beyond this totality" (ibid: 153). The connections which exist between suffering on the one hand and both emotionality and spirituality on the other are explored by Robinson (2008). Spirituality is defined as freedom, and a capacity to transcend the self, to be able to live with ambiguities, to be oneself (2008: 186). Dorr wrote that

spirituality is centred more in the heart than in the head (1990: 193). The emotions appear in a spiritual sense to be an integral part of coping with suffering. "In order to discover meaning in suffering, it has to be particular and has to engage the affective and somatic dimensions" (Robinson 2008: 182). Suffering may be transcended as a person 'locks into' a higher sense of identity.

As feelings are acknowledged and validated, truth is demanded and a sense of wholeness alongside a sense of justice results (Robinson 2008: 185). Reality is accepted and may be transformed in a creative way (ibid: 187). Suffering is overcome emotionally and spiritually. Writing of this possibility, Peltomaki describes this life change as being dependent upon "the innermost part of an individual" (2008: 231). She writes, "Obeying hope enables me to live, to survive, to endure and stand up to life" (Peltomaki 2008: 231).

*My struggle continues, not only within my own personal realm, but within the boundaries set by the social order which is set in the interest of men, through ensuring male control over women's sexuality. Sometimes the struggle is overwhelming, but I have been uplifted by this opportunity to speak as a woman, despite my awareness of the complexity of my position. I am free to speak and so I do, and it is with hope that I imagine "my voice will go with you" (Rosen 1982: 23).*

The feminist perspective, which makes the assumption that women are fundamentally unhappy because of "suffering born of the patriarchy and other systematic oppression" (Burstow, 1992: viii), is upheld by my experience. I agree that the oppression I have lived through was "insidious and psychologically destructive...it takes an incredible struggle for us to win back even the beginnings of our lost

humanity” (ibid: viii). There is however an awareness of the inhibiting power of a patriarchal culture which prevents the full human development of all people (Zappone 1991). As the quest for a personal integration of mind, body, emotions and spirit unfolds, feminists can “hope for wholeness” (ibid: 51).

Wholeness as defined by Zappone (1991) is contained within an integrated self, which has as its foundation a deep sense of self worth and value. This can be jeopardised “amidst tragedy, suffering, loss and death”. Nevertheless, “Wholeness can be experienced even as we carry our own scars” (1991: 165). Spirituality encompasses growth and change towards a whole, human life (ibid: 9). Tacey (2004) uses the metaphor of a journey to bring the growth and change of spirituality to life. She writes, spirituality is a “journey into hidden depths and self knowledge ... is the search for guiding visions and values” (2004: 65).

In relation to suffering, the power of spirituality enables an individual “to shed hostilities associated with being a victim” (2004: 66). This indicates the potential within spirituality for managing suffering and coping with adversity such as domestic violence through self knowledge and emotional awareness and understanding.

*It is with some hesitancy that I acknowledge the possibility that this review has become increasingly self absorbed. The post-modernist view is that our encounters with others are no longer framed by a sense of 'we;' rather, these encounters have been captured by a sense of 'me'. The subjectivity displayed during this part of the review has been aroused by statements given by others which have resonated as 'true'. The confessional style I have adopted has been described by Denzin & Lincoln (1998) as soul cleansing, a sensibility which has been engendered by feelings which I choose not to suppress.*

### **Feminist dilemmas**

This review should contain an examination of the theoretical dilemmas surrounding the position I have adopted and the underlying assumptions which are fundamental to my research. Ropers-Huilman (2004) asserts that the researcher has obligations when interpreting others' lives to use her own words and paradigms to present stories of her own experiences with the other. There is an intertwining of stories which can only retain authenticity so long as the researcher is clear as to how she is shaping the others' stories. The paradigms I adopt will need to be expressed, within the methodology, as my gaze and my presence within the stories will depend upon the ontological and epistemological positions which I choose to shape my research. My decisions are founded on feminist pedagogy which relies upon a self reflexive process (Lee 1993).

As a woman, and for many years an abused woman, I sought to review work by women who had faced similar dilemmas to my own. Robertson (2002), a survivor of bulimia, researching into bulimia through the telling of personal experiences, describes a post-structural feminist perspective, which owes much to the writing of Foucault. The feminist endeavour to acknowledge difference, to honour complexity and to value the narrative was central to her work. She also valued the reflexive approach celebrating ways of knowing which embrace subjectivity. Her own story is part of the process of research. She believes there is a need to share her own experience with the audience so that they are able to form their own personal evaluations of her work and recognise the imprint she has made on her research. She states that this research is personally significant as it highlights emotional aspects, redresses power inequalities and amplifies the voices of the participants.

Kelly (1988) focussed on repressed knowledge, and how women who had experienced violence should be given a voice. Ramazanoglu (1993) highlights the work of Kelly as being a courageous attempt to design research specifically to express the voices of the oppressed, in her case women who had experienced domestic violence. Early attempts such as Kelly's, were trying to break the taboos surrounding domestic violence and embraced Foucault's vision of empowering the disempowered, putting power back where it needs to be.

Etherington writes that "innovative and non-traditional methodologies encourage us to use ourselves in research writing, providing us with many opportunities to be creative (2004: 249). With the use of ourselves, there must be a search to understand oneself and, at the same time, the world. Law explains, "I began to immerse myself in the heuristic research process. It helped me to find meaning in my life, and provided me with a vehicle of expression (cited by Etherington: 155). The dilemma is that self disclosure has not been done traditionally, but there is value in being known for who we really are. "It's like I want to be seen and I don't want to be seen. I want to be on the stage and I want to be hidden under the chair at the same time (Etherington 2004: 243).

The dilemma also exists in the questions, what if anything shall I leave out? Which bit of my story am I going to tell? Do I need to make all my struggles transparent (Ribbens & Edwards 1998)? Reflexive monitoring needs to be on-going and perpetual; it needs to take into consideration "the complex interplay of our own personal biography, power and status and interactions with the participants and written work" (Etherington 2004: 67). As Jolleson says, "I would worry most if I



stopped worrying” (cited by Etherington 2004: 70). Including autobiographical insights and experiences exposes the author’s vulnerabilities to the reader and makes the author clearly visible. There is a realistic sense of lived experience, and a powerful authenticity and honesty which is born of sharing with the reader events which may never have been seen or heard before.

Another dilemma is due to the inevitable issues around power. Etherington states there is a need for us as reflexive researchers “to scrutinise and interrogate our own positions, views and behaviours, turning back on ourselves the same scrupulous lens through which we examine the lives of our participants” (2004: 226). In this way, there is a deeper awareness of what we are doing and a resultant honouring of those whose lives we are entering. Moran-Ellis (1996) writes how the repercussions of her own life fed into her research and left her feeling exposed to the dilemma of how to express what she had learnt through her own experiences and how to combine this knowledge with what others had shared with her. She was left asking the question, “What I can do about it personally and politically” (:179).

Weis et al. talk about the honour that exists between themselves and the women they interviewed. “We have been entrusted by girls and women who quietly and in selective places are speaking to us about the violence which permeates their lives” (1998: 55). They write of their horror and disgust at the silence which surrounds domestic violence, and how they are appalled by the experiences of the women and girls they interviewed. Their emotions are aroused and clearly described throughout the paper. They call for “a critical and vibrant voice of hope” (1998: 71) which will bring action, and change.

The emotional involvement of the researcher may lend insight into the research process (Blakely 2007). I am one of the 'small number of researchers' (ibid.) who openly admits that this research is affecting me on an emotional level.

*I am guided by the ethic of caring, caring for my research subject, caring for myself and caring for other survivors. How I represent this in my research has to involve a combining of my intellect with my emotions, both working together to co-form my work.*

I am compelled to express my feelings because of the horrors which are presented to me by research into domestic violence. Campbell writes, "There is no line which separates us, the researchers, from them, the survivors...everything we hear reminds us of our own vulnerabilities" (2001: 39). The risks associated with this kind of emotional involvement of the researcher may possibly lead to a loss of effective practice, and a dependency developed between the researched and the researcher (O'Neill 1996: 132). This in turn points to the need for emotional support which is highlighted by Moran-Ellis (1996: 185). The emotional toll for a researcher may be high and that is why Moran Ellis (1996) proposes "that all research that is concerned with violence against women and children should have as part of the method ... a clear mechanism for giving support" (: 185).

The reluctance and vulnerability of the researcher and participants to expose intimate aspects of intimate relationships and private experience may create some difficulties (Mauthner 1998: 53). The reasons for this include the subordinate position of private knowledge in relation to the public, and can only be overcome as knowledge is acquired through a sensitive interviewing process.

Finally, I am all too aware that my intense experiences of oppression might altogether blind me to or deter me from recognising any other kinds of experiences. Burstow states, "It is a limited vision involving its own bias. I regret whatever misrepresentation or insensitivity has resulted. And I look forward to correction..." (1992: xviii). It is with this sentiment that I began to search further and deeper into the complexity of my own experiences and those of others, seeking to use what I have learnt about myself during this process to elucidate and capture the stories of others. Walker writes, "The nature of abuse is that it's secretive, furtive and denied" (1992: 189). I am supposing at this time to be open, unashamed and visible, unmasking abuse so that all who are involved in this study, myself, participants and audience may benefit.

*The value for me has felt like an escape, exhilarating and troubling. Like a phoenix arising from the ashes, it was a moment for rejoicing. "Free at last, free at last, we thank our God, free at last" (Martin Luther King). Release is wonderful, and I felt it when I had expressed parts of my story in printed words for the first time. More darkly, however, I was haunted by the knowledge that I had been imprisoned by my own choice for most of my adult life. There have been many regrets, but there is still the knowledge that I do possess "formidable strengths" (Burstow 1992: 153). As an abused woman who for years did not believe that anyone would recognise that I had any strengths, it was wonderful to read what Kelly wrote about me. "(I was) not simply submitting, (I was) making active and critical decisions about how to cope and how to survive on a moment to moment basis. (I was) deciding to hide certain things. (I was) deciding to duck, (I was) deciding not to duck, (I) actively and passively resisted violation, whether it was numbing (myself) so that I would not feel the pain or finding ways of avoiding the abuser's ire" (cited in Burstow 1992: 153). A dawning of a belief in myself began, but with it a trepidation that came with my new found feelings of responsibility and a stronger sense of the person I had become.*

## **Chapter Two Part One**

### **Methodology: gazing at the walls**

#### **A hermeneutic enquiry**

"The hermeneutic method...has as its task a discovery of knowledge in the sense of understanding....It is not a purely cognitive operation of the mind at all, but that special moment when life understands life" (Van Manen 1977: 214). Hermeneutics is concerned with revealing the meaning of things, meaning which may be hidden from view or overtly concealed. The possibility that meaning may never fully come to view is accepted (How 2003). Gubrium (1988) refers to "the attachment of meaning" as being the process by which an interpretative approach locates "meaning or reality to ...behaviour" (: 15). Shakespeare et al. (1993) described hermeneutics as a method which involves "attempts to impose meaning" and as such is open to challenge and alternative explanations (: 75).

Habermas advocates a 'critical' paradigm which is committed to an unlimited inquiry, a constant critique, and a fundamental self-criticism (cited by Van Manen 1977: 221). It is with some certainty that I would suppose that an enquiry embracing a hermeneutic methodology will raise more questions than provide answers. Ambiguity rests in human experience. My effort will be to tease out the hidden meanings and to try to make visible those that are deeply embedded.

This study seeks to find the deeper meanings contained within lived experience through a careful, thorough and systematic gathering of young people's stories, followed by a

complete immersion into the resultant data - “a progressive uncovering and explication” (Tesch 1990). Through this methodology, the aim is to uncover hidden meaning and gain an understanding of the life stories which will reveal in some measure the complexity, depth and varied explanations which may exist within the shared experiences. This study of life stories, designed using hermeneutical methods, may contribute to “a part of human understanding” (Miller 2000: 15).

### **The Search for Meaning in stories**

Searching for meaning is a partial affair. Denzin (1989) states that an interpretive work is an act of ceaseless renewal, the story is never finally told, never completely, exhaustively. The stories which are told establish individuality, are open ended, inconclusive and contain multiple interpretations. Meaning is ‘attached’ (Gubrium 1988) to our lives and to behaviour, through a process which moves from reciprocators to researchers and back. Images and meanings are constructed with each serving as a basis for the other. Story, biography and reflexivity embody the character of this process, and interpretive knowledge is formed. Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience. “A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history” (Denzin & Lincoln 1998b: 155).

There are many reasons why stories are powerful sources of knowledge. Hughes describes this methodology as an endeavour which “examines the actions, events and artefacts from within human life, not as the observation of some external reality” (1990: 90). The pursuit of knowledge need not be limited in any way. An ideographic story

takes into account human values and changeability. It may contain powerful insights and intuitive thoughts. It is first hand, out of the 'real' world. A story or a narrative is absorbing. It engages the listener (reader), and invites an interpretation. It offers us experience of living through, not simply knowing about the people in the story (Greenhalgh 1999). I wondered how it might be possible to 'live through' another person's story, and knew it had to be connected to sharing ourselves as "somebody different from the person who routinely and unproblematically inhabits and moves through social space and time" (Morgan cited by Stanley 1992: 655).

Hardy (1968) writes, "We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticise, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative" (cited by Greenhalgh 1999: 46).

### **Ontological and epistemological positions**

What I see (ontology) and how I see (epistemology) are "intimately interwoven" (Scheurich 1997: 50). My gaze at the wall surrounding me is defined by existential factors, my feelings and senses, my experiences and my beliefs. My interest in other walls beyond my own experience takes me into a hermeneutic – phenomenological dialogue which Steir (1991) describes as being conversational in nature, as it expresses alternative voices. As my gaze switches from my own experience to that of others, there begins a collaborative endeavour which can be described as making sense together.

Hermeneutic knowledge brings about fundamental understanding which is a cooperative, sense-making and an interpretive exercise. Reason describes the essential nature of this orientation – “the purpose of our lives is to make meaning” (1988: 12).

My own ontological orientation will lead me to pose particular questions and perceive certain meanings. I will need to integrate my own subjective experience with my critical faculties so that I can develop a unique perspective on my discoveries and learning. However, because every human experience is novel, emergent and filled with multiple, often conflicting meanings and interpretations (Denzin 1989), there is a need to take stock of my actions, to possess a critical self-scrutiny and to be actively reflexive.

### **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is defined as “reflecting upon and understanding our own personal, political and intellectual autobiographies as researchers and making explicit where we are located in relation to our research respondents” (Mauthner & Doucet 1998: 121).

Fundamentally, it is a personal journey, breaking down and getting into the space between ourselves and others. New ideas may grow out of these spaces. The paradigm is holistic and unique. There is a commitment to enlightenment and empowerment which Carr describes as a ‘reflexive understanding’ (1995: 55). The relationship between the research and the participants shapes the inquiry and the text. Attention to the reflexive nature of this research will dominate the train of philosophical thought, as there is a need to rigorously examine the researcher’s part in the construction of the stories.

Mason (1998) writes there is a need to openly interrogate my own assumptions so that they will become clear to the reader. A critical awareness of my own desires, feelings and interpretations may lead to an understanding of my journey in relation to others. It may lead to a place where “I am crossing to understand you, to translate what you say into my language, my experience” (Kemp cited by Jessop & Penny 1998: 28).

The walls of silence erected around domestic violence are viewed as a phenomenon which needs to be scaled. The commitment is to create the conditions whereby this is possible. The phenomenological – interpretive paradigm is seen as possessing the potential to “let us come to an understanding of ourselves and the lives of those for whom we bear pedagogic responsibility” (Tesch 1990: 48). Denzin (1989) writes that there is verisimilitude in building shared experiences, in drawing on personal experiences or the experiences of others in an effort to form an understanding and interpretation of a particular phenomenon. He describes this as a phenomenological stream, when the person becomes caught up in the thoughts and the flow of inner experience, and enters into the emotional life of another person. This ‘immersion’ into the life of another leads the researcher to vicariously share in the experiences that have been captured.

Knowledge is constructed, accounts of the world take place through “shared systems of intelligibility” (Steir 1991: 78).

### **Concern for the individual**

How can I do justice to the whole thing – to all that is out there, and in here, in myself?

The interpretive approach to research is characterised by a concern for the individual



(Black 1993). It is idiosyncratic and complex, containing myriad dimensions.

Experience is the starting point, and there is a need for personal experiential inferences to be made in order to understand what is happening. It is “research characterised by authenticity, reciprocity and trust” (Denzin & Lincoln 1998a: 412). There is an interplay between different voices. “We hear the philosophically astute voicing of things and events of their worlds that simultaneously is heard by them and by us as voices other than their own” (ibid: 74). We live ‘on a knife edge’ struggling to express our voice amidst an enquiry designed to capture others’ experience and represent their voices. The desire is to understand rather than explain.

*My eyes are windows to my soul  
Blood red and swollen slits  
Averted and afraid to open and see any confident look  
You stand outside my window,  
And the glass is too dark to see what is  
Concealed beneath and behind  
What has been shoved into the corners of my room  
And you cannot wipe away my tears,  
To reach me.  
My eyes are windows  
Bruised with tears*

### Subjectivity

This study possesses a radical methodology in that the subjective involvement of the researcher is maximised. Blake (1993) writes that a subjective study is a caring labour with shared feelings and experiences. Subjective research is firmly grounded in feminist

thinking which “has rejected positivism, largely because of its emphasis on value-freedom and objectivity ... distance, objectivity and the elimination of researcher bias is impossible to achieve in any research ... not least because our perspective will determine what we study, what or whom we include in the research and how we present our data” (Parr 1998: 90).

The dilemma associated with the subjective nature of an enquiry such as this is rooted in the challenging of public discourses of academia which give credence to “a discourse or knowledge form that can be understood and accepted within the dominant Western framework of knowledge and culture” (Edwards & Ribbens 1998: 3). The need for interpretation of her findings into an ‘accepted’ form conflicts with a researcher’s subjective desire to “present the voices of the less powerful” (Standing 1998: 200) along with her own. Distancing ourselves from this challenge, associated with feminist research, may result in the loss of “authenticity, emotion and vibrancy” (Ibid.: 201).

A systematic investigation of subjectivity is necessary in order to understand the pressures and concerns associated with a research enterprise which welcomes and embraces it. Feminist practice (Stanley & Wise 1993), postmodern influences (Lather 1991) and autobiography (Ribbens 1993) all point to a research process which welcomes subjectivity (Birch 1998: 174). Feminists make explicit the values which guide their work (Holland et al 1995). Feminist pedagogy has as its focus the tenet that experience is the source of learning and knowledge (Reinharz 1992). Some of its aims are to present human diversity, to integrate personal accounts, to create social change and to embody a

special relationship with the respondents and the reader (Ibid.: 259). Postmodernist thinking embodies "a practice of rethinking" (Stronach 1997: 40) which connects comfortably with feminist views and with the rise of qualitative research methodologies. A definition of qualitative research methods will be discussed in the section on interviewing.

Reason (1988) describes the subjective view as possessing the potential of uncovering the 'roots of the soul' which govern the perspectives we have of ourselves and the world. It can be both cautious and bold. It can embody ambiguity and depth. Most powerfully of all, it embraces an insider's view.

Atkinson (1990) asserts that the text of such an enquiry has the potential to move from one voice to another. The sublimation of any voice including my own would be contrary to a philosophical commitment which establishes the need to listen to and disseminate the voices of those who have been traditionally silent (Standing 1998: 186). The interplay of different voices would be a hallmark of this study, which can only be achieved through my being "a reflective partner, a co-participant whose task it is to facilitate the emancipation of the victims of social ...circumstances, to help people transform their situations and hence resolve their needs and deprivations" (Blaike 1993: 210).

Interpretations are infinite. Post-modern insights are utilized in so far as it is possible, "to bring into question the nature of identity, the public-private distinction, and how to develop voice and difference" (Ropers-Huilman 1999: 107). The researcher is involved

in an 'emergent' paradigm, which allows her to be "actualised rather than repressed, authentic rather than alienated, dialogic rather than authoritarian, open now to questions about commitment and reflexivity, and to the expression of 'voice' (Stronach & Maclure 1997: 44). The subjective element must be considered throughout. The phenomenon of an enquiry such as this is that the subjective involvement of the researcher is essential. The immersion of the researcher into the lives of others results in understandings and deep meanings surfacing. More coherent, authentic and profound stories are gained from shared feelings and insights (Ellingson 1998). A commitment to the young people of this research is stated openly and unreservedly. The study will seek to create "an authentic gaze into the soul of another with the added frisson of a politically correct dialogue where researcher and researched offer mutual understanding and support" (Silverman 1997 cited by Roberts 2002: 249).

However, subjectivity raises perplexing questions, not least those which ask how is it possible to ensure the stories being told are not distorted, sublimated or misunderstood by the passionate perspective of an insider (Van Maanen 1988). How can an outsider's dispassionate perspective be allowed to play its part in the interpretative process, ensuring a uniqueness of each story and preventing an unbalanced view? Balancing these perspectives might be compared to walking on a knife edge. However, it must be acknowledged that the construction of a story takes place within a "mutualness" within which the reciprocators and researcher co-create, as each serve as a basis for the other (Steir 1991).

Construction of the interpretative stories is a product of my own subjective experience integrated with my critical faculties (Birch 1998). In this way this research is shaped by my autobiography, my relationship with the young people and the aims of the enquiry. The emerging dominant issues and themes of the stories, though entangled within complex patterns, contradictions, exceptions and differences, will be interpreted, formed and expressed out of a subjective analysis (Alldred 1998). I will have become a character in the lives of the young people; the research will have shaped their lives, and my life (Ribbens 1998). The interpretative process therefore will become a complex interplay of reflexive thoughts and feelings with a deep concern for the young people (Standing 1998).

The very act of representation involves at least two parties: that which represents and that which is represented. The two are not exactly the same. Even when I speak for myself, I choose which me to present to you (Birch 1998). Which part of me is most important for me to emphasise or hide? Representation is thus always partial. I can never know all of you because you are always changing. I can never be you. "I am always crossing to understand you, to *translate what you say into my language, my experiences*" (Italics added), (Kemp cited by Jessop & Penny 1998: 28).

The translation process is my domain. It is my work, and if any value is to be attached to this work, it is dependent upon my ability to creatively analyse the stories shared with me, to weave in my observations, feelings and perceptions, blending the whole to form a tapestry of narratives, with some threads more clearly visible than others (Ribbens &

Edwards 1998). What needs to be emphasised must be based on the stories told, the participants' voices must be the strongest threads. My aim will be to lend power to their voices, rather than subjugate them, as I seek to be an advocate for them, and uphold their rights and wishes (Bart & Moran 1993).

The process of analysis could well raise difficulties which surround the articulation of my presence within the interpretative enterprise. "Words can be interpreted in a multitude of ways" (Mauthner & Doucet 1998: 122). As we reflect on the need to recognise that the knowledge we seek comes from "being involved in a relationship with our subject matter ... and must contain a systematic examination and explication of our beliefs" (ibid: 122), we come to know that we may not always recognise the 'filters' through which we see the world (ibid: 122). The analysis should seek to embrace these ideas and also recognised that data analysis is an ongoing process throughout the research even into the writing up stage (Denzin 1989a).

As I seek to understand others' stories, the subjective orientation encased within the interpretative process will smudge and mystify the stories, resulting in ambiguity, but will also lead me to pose particular questions and perceive certain meanings (Gorbich 2007). However, Van Manen (1977) stresses that the epistemological gaze is 'distortion' free because it is undistorted by exploitation and repressive authority. In this way, the subjective nature of this enquiry must be transparent, explained and applauded, and it should demonstrate a complete collaboration between the researcher and the researched.

The title of Eisner's book published in 1991 begins 'The Enlightened Eye'. This is very descriptive of the subjectivity contained within a methodology which seeks to shed light on situations and experiences of uncertainty and uniqueness. Pugmire (1998) believes that this subjective state is in itself knowledge, and will engender the emergence of suppressed and silenced voices.

As I gaze at the walls, I create what I see as the most effective method of scaling them, and through "communicating and cooperating with others," I may find "a writing 'self'" (Pugmire 1998: 8). I can show my human side. I can communicate my subjective understandings and discovered meanings in my writing, and can do so without fear, despite the inherently unstable nature of language. Denzin (1989a) asserts that there can never be a clear, unambiguous statement of anything. However this may be reconciled with a commitment to the position that an interpretive researcher studies 'real' people who have 'real-life' experiences. Real life is messy, and so is experiential research. Transforming this real life which is private and personal into a form which may be understood publicly presents dilemmas and difficulties. I must seek for my own writing self, but at the same time be constantly aware of the intended audience of my words.

Simultaneously, I must remember my moral obligation to those who have shared their stories with me, to articulate their views, feelings, thoughts, images, sensitivities and much more as effectively as possible. The ethical consequences of what Seidman (1991) calls the higher moral ground of qualitative methodology will need to be explored thoroughly.

## **Personal and Social History**

“Researchers must be self-reflexively aware of inter-subjective relationships ....knowledge is produced by subjects situated in particular social and historical discourses” (Summerfield 2000: 2). The importance of placing this research in some form of social context has been highlighted by Blaike (1993) who affirmed the need to recognise that the researcher has the task of facilitating the emancipation of victims of social, political or economic injustice, and to help people transform their situations and resolve their deprivations. Each of our stories has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history. My story possesses particular elements attached to specific political, social and economic worlds. My ethnic origin, my parents’ social status, my education and philosophical influences will all play some part in my story, and will, therefore cross over to the stories being told.

## **Methodology and Action**

- the use of an interpretative design to discover meanings and understandings of the stories of the young people
- the subjectivity of the researcher is fully embraced
- the reflexivity of the researcher is fully examined and explained
- the care of each young person is an overriding principle which would hopefully lead to her/his safety and well being



## **Scaling the walls: appropriate climbing boots needed**

### **Interviewing**

This section examines the theoretical foundations of a study which has in depth interviews as the chosen means of data collection. The reasoning behind this choice and the decisions and thought processes which underpin this aspect of the methodology are discussed here.

### **Qualitative Research**

Interviewing is normally associated with qualitative research methods. These are a preferred choice of those undertaking research who are seeking to “explore substantive areas about which little is known or about which much is known to gain novel understandings” (Strauss & Corbin 1996: 11). Qualitative research is, in a general sense, “about people’s lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions, and feelings as well as about ... social movements, cultural phenomena and interactions between nations” (ibid: 11).

Qualitative methodology lends itself to research which attempts to understand the meaning or nature of experience of persons with problems ...it lends itself to getting out in the field and finding out what people are thinking and feeling” (ibid: 11). Gorbich (2007) describes qualitative inquiry in terms of an emphasis on language as being the dominant means by which meaning can be created. Through speaking and writing, through explanations and interpretations, the world of others can be described and

recorded without necessarily having to resort to what some might see as dehumanising statistical and normative analysis. That is not to say that research using qualitative methods cannot be united or combined in some way with quantitative ones (Holland et al. 1995).

“We employ the tools available to us... furthermore our application of these tools is a creative act” (Hekman 1995: 82). The first obligation of this research is to understand the uniqueness and complexity of each individual. I need to appreciate that my search for meaning will only be a partial affair, but will provide an opportunity to gain and use ‘reflective insights’ (Schon 2000: 61). Interviewing in qualitative research provides just such an opportunity, which may create ‘an ideal speech situation’. Interviews are tools which allow social interaction, but need to be sensitive to the multiplicity of experience and personal reality. Mason describes ‘reality’ as emotion, thought, feeling, consciousness, understandings, interpretations, motivations, ideas, attitudes, beliefs, views, accounts, stories, narratives, biographies, actions, reactions... and goes on to state that these things are “meaningful properties of social reality” (1998: 39). By talking and listening, we can gain access to others’ accounts.

Although we can’t actually get into the head of another person, we can be present as experiences are recounted. It is possible to partially understand the interaction, along with a need to be sensitive to the rights of the person and flexible in helping the flow of thoughts and meaning-making to take place.

### **Semi-structured interviews**

Semi- structured interviews give some focus to the research questions. There is a need to “firmly entrench the research questions in my head” (Mason 1998: 47). All the decisions should be grounded in these questions, in order to focus on the issues, be relevant, and be meaningful to the person within an empathetic and sensitive framework. As the questions are formulated and their phrasing decided upon, close attention needs to be given to the way the interview is conducted. The manner and demeanour of how best to ask the questions must be considered. The interview must generate relevant data, and yet I must humbly present myself as a learner possessing a ‘sense of wonder’ (Tesch 1990: 69), and not impose any preconceptions of my own. I will need to adopt a demeanour which possesses a willingness to be surprised, and allow the person’s needs to frame the interview (Seidman 1998).

In depth interviews may provide a wealth of rich data, when the stories are elicited through a corroborative activity which allows the meaning of experience to become manifest (Silverman 1997). Hermeneutic interviewing may generate a fuller and fairer representation of individual perspectives, feelings and voices (Seidman 1998). In this way, in depth semi-structured interviews which are focused on the research questions, but which possess within them a desire to allow the flow of thought to run freely, through a careful balancing of listening and talking and a wish to maximise the participation of the interviewee, have the potential to produce an honest and ‘real’ conversation (Reason 1988). “We need to consider what we could do to create a truly listening ethos,

communicating trust, respect, patience, openness, sincerity, warmth and ways of adopting a non-judgemental style” (Davie, Upton & Varma 1996: 39).

### **Non-judgemental approach**

A non-judgemental stance, which is fundamental to a feminist approach, where the interviewee feels at ease, involved and safe is likely to effect the creation of rapport and the conditions for honesty and openness (Holland et al. 1995). Being non-judgemental has other benefits. Denzin & Lincoln (1998b) write that those who study personal experience need to be open to a rich and sometimes seemingly endless range of possible events and stories and to be prepared to follow leads in many directions. Clearly if followed in this way, the qualitative interview may be “one of the most powerful ways we can use to try and understand our fellow human beings” (ibid: 47).

### **Interview power relations**

Power relations within the speech situation were a crucial element which needed to be addressed (Allred 1998). Interviewing young people presented particular concerns. Presenting myself as a learner contributed to efforts which confirmed that I hoped to achieve a feeling of equal status within the interview. My behaviour in relation to establishing trust and rapport was crucial and essential to interview success. Empathy has been mentioned, but needs to be stressed as relationships are formed. I needed to put myself into the lives of the young people and then attempt to see from their perspectives. As I immersed myself in their situations, and adapted to the young people’s worlds, I became aware of multiple perspectives, of differences and of reflexive issues which led

Methodology: gazing at the walls

me in the direction of an empathetic understanding (Ribbens & Edwards 1998). The interviews became more honest, morally sound and reliable, producing a more 'realistic' outcome (Stanley 1992).

*Am I ready to hear and feel your pain?  
When you hid under the bed  
Could I curl up with you?  
When you ran for the police  
Would my legs take me, keep up,  
Be strong enough?  
When you visited your mum in hospital  
Could I be there, holding your other hand?  
Am I ready to understand your pain  
Or does my pain get in the way?  
Causing a block between us?  
Creating a wall of silence?*

The creation and implementation of semi-structured interviews must be founded upon the moral obligation to enable the subjects to articulate their views as effectively as possible. Giving them more control, allowing silences and being prepared to follow their shifts of consciousness contributed to a transfer of power from myself to the young people (Alldred 1998).

I hoped that they would be enriched and empowered by the interview experience.

## **Interviewing and Action**

- Interviews with 5 young people
- Semi-structured interview format
- A non-judgemental style emphasising a desire to empower the young people
- An open stance to allow for a wide range of possibilities
- An emphasis on a willingness to feel empathy

## **Reaching the top: analysis theory**

### **Interpreting the data**

Analysis and interpretation of the stories commence from the time the first word is spoken. In a metaphorical sense, the wall of silence has been conquered from that moment; yet, it is only at the point of completion, when the stories are heard beyond the confines of the interview room, that we can safely say that the top has been reached. For this reason, this section is devoted to an investigation into analysis, interpretation and dissemination, as proposed by other researchers.

“An indeterminate ambiguity lies at the heart of the interview interaction...the researcher brings considerable conscious and unconscious baggage to the interpretive moment...the written result, the final interpretation of the interview interaction is overloaded with the researcher’s interpretive baggage...this written representation is largely a mirror image of the researcher and her baggage” (Scheurich 1997: 73).

### **Finding categories**

As I approached the prospect of interpretive moments, I would need a plan which would enable me to move step by step. Tesch (1990) describes a constructive approach which generates constructs and propositions. This begins with a thorough reading of the transcripts, followed by checking for topics or themes which occur and reoccur. These regularities may indicate emerging themes or patterns. She asserts it is important to take note of any hunches or gut feelings, as these may have significance. Then the first step

may be taken in the development of categories, applied as an organising scheme to the emerging themes. Categories can be studied individually, and checked for congruence. Linkages across categories may be found, and configurations within categories may emerge. The next step is the use of codes “which aggregate all data about the same topic or theme, so that each category can be studied individually” (Tesch 1990: 91). A similar method of interpretation is described by Denzin & Lincoln (1998b), who describe a way of inductively reaching categories or regularities using an iterative process, which uncovers themes or constructs. This is a response to Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967), and again is dependant upon a step by step effort, which leads from description to interpretation to explanation.

These steps are described as being tactics, which generate meaning. It begins with noting patterns and themes, and finding plausibility. Then concepts are formed which are then clustered according to connections. There then follows a series of intellectual exercises which are designed to sharpen understanding of the data. For example, there might be an attempt at making contrasts and comparisons, or shuttling back and forward from first hand data to formed categories. Scientific language is used to describe aspects of this method, such as variables, data and evidence. It is for this reason that there is a sense of incompatibility between the qualitative interview and this way of interpreting the conversations.

However, finding meaning through analysis is an essential part of this research. Even though the interviews may be compelling, and we may want to stop and let them speak



for themselves, the task is to discover meaning (Riessman 1993). We have to ask questions of meaning. The answers will shape the construction of the research text.

### **Using voice-relational ideas**

Mauthner & Doucet (1998) describe the absence of explicit descriptions of qualitative research data analysis, with particular emphasis on the early stages of data analysis. "As qualitative researchers we engage in a somewhat unsystematic process of following up certain leads and seeing where they take us" (1998: 121). The 'leads' are influenced by our own biographies. "The production of knowledge must contain a systematic examination and explication of our beliefs, biases and social location" (Harding cited by Mauthner & Doucet 1998: 122). The confrontation with ourselves makes the early attempts at data analysis uncomfortable, but also invigorating. There is also a lack of clarity around the use of an analytical method such as Grounded Theory. Strauss & Corbin (1990) demonstrate that methods can be adapted and can evolve as researchers use them.

Mauthner & Doucet describe a 'relational ontology' at the core of their analysis which "posits the notion of selves-in-relation, or relational being, a view of human beings as embedded in a complex web of intimate and larger social relations... so that people are viewed as interdependent" (1998: 125). This method of data analysis "was developed over several years by Lyn Brown and Carol Gilligan ... (see Brown & Gilligan 1992; 1993 ...)" (Mauthner & Doucet 1998: 125). The method had at its centre the idea of a relational ontology, which uses as its foundation the idea of 'selves-in-relation' (Ruddock

1989 cited by Mauthner & Doucet 1998:125). This method prescribes and emphasises the theoretical issues within analysis as being interdependence, dependence and independence.

The modifications which Mauthner & Doucet (1998) apply to Grounded Theory were brought about through a desire to research areas of private life which required an analysis focused on processes of reflection and decision making, which “shed light on the meanings, processes, relationships and contradictions which are central to domestic life” (ibid: 130). As the researcher listens with “an open mind and an open heart” (ibid: 136), the story is ever changing and constituted through the established relationships. “We pay attention to what we think this person is trying to tell us within the context of the relationship and research setting” (ibid: 137).

### **A voice centred method of analysis**

The struggles associated with the finding and expressing of voice are many (Denzin & Lincoln 1998b: 172). The development of voice after silence has its own particular challenges, specifically as the move is made from the interview data to the research interpretative dialogue. Which voice needs to be heard? How can the voices heard reflect upon and speak to the audience? How can I the researcher represent the young people’s voices when ambiguity or indeterminacy is part of their stories (Scheurich 1997)? The shifting of meanings and understandings needs to be embraced “to open up multiple spaces” (ibid: 75) within the analysis process.

It has been pointed out that the hearing of the voices of the marginalised and disempowered is fundamental to feminist theory and practice (Ribbens & Edwards 1998). In this context, it is not enough to gather children and young people's stories, and provide a public platform for their perspectives, "we need to attend to the meanings that will be made of their accounts" (Alldred 1998: 155). The claim I would wish to make is that I in some way will represent the voices of the young people within the analysis of their stories. Alldred (1998) goes on to say, "Researchers interviewing children need to consider how we hear children's voices, meaning not only the approaches we employ, but also how the representations of their voices will be heard in the public sphere (1998: 167). It is therefore imperative that consideration should be given to "an open and relatively unstructured approach" (Parr 1998: 101), which will allow for the flexibility and sensitivity needed to bring the young people's voices into authentic focus.

### **Feminist influences**

The choice of a feminist framework, the ontological position embraced by the researcher and the choice of paradigm all reveal the reflexive nature of qualitative research and analysis in particular. There is a need to "trace our research journeys and make our own thinking and reasoning explicit" in order that the questions around whether or not we are "appropriating their voices and experiences" or "further disempowering them by taking away their voice, agency or ownership" can be honestly answered (Mauthner & Doucet 1998: 139).

My experience and my relationship with the participants of the enquiry will reflexively shape the text. Connelly & Clandinin (1990) assert that the writing of the text is influenced by the care of the researcher in an on-going relationship with the participants, and the ways the research is read and for what purpose. Denzin writes about interpretive texts as seeking to bring lived experience before the reader. "A major goal is to create a text that permits a willing reader to share vicariously in the experiences that have been captured" (1989: 3). There is the potential of creating thick descriptions which are deep, detailed and dense, and which powerfully engage with the reader (Denzin 1989). By going to the heart of what is being interpreted, it is possible to discover multiple meanings which inform the participants' lives and their stories, and which contain the sights and sounds, the feelings of persons and places and the unmistakeable voices of lived experience (Riessman 1993).

### **Subjectivity and analysis**

It is time to remember the 'baggage' of the researcher (Scheurich 1997). As I enter into the lives of the participants, so they enter into mine. I change their lives, and so do they mine. Their stories as interpreted and recorded by me, are a reflection of my identity and my story (Gluck & Patai 1991). So it is that I hope to make my voice clear, so that my signature can be felt and seen, but without stifling others' voices. I wish to be transparent in acknowledging my influence on the research throughout, and that my role is to co-create, co-construct and co-represent reality (Stanley 1992). Reality is not fixed. It is refracted and changed through others' views. Distortions, contradictions and diversity make up many meanings (Strauss & Corbin 1997). Nevertheless, it is with an honest

desire to understand the stories of the subjects of this research that I approach this task, confident in the knowledge that my 'baggage' will ultimately increase the likelihood of this study possessing a sincere and empathic heart (Scheurich 1997).

"It is important to recognise that children are struggling for dignity within structures which are struggling to shut them down. Their lives are being invaded by violence from all sides. The children who live in abusive homes are waiting to see what we will do about it" (Weis, Marusza & Fine 1998: 71). What I hope to do is reach interested educational professionals and others who recognise the imperative nature of this research. The voices of the young people should be heard through publications, conference papers, training days in schools and colleges and by other young people. The richness of their stories, combined with the unique circumstances surrounding this research, will provide insights to those who are seeking to support women and children experiencing domestic abuse.

### **Analysis and Action**

- analysis began with voice centred relational analysis
- subsequent layers of analysis are formed around emotionality and coping skills
- the voices of the young people are at the centre of the analysis throughout
- the emphasis of the analysis is on depth and complexity of categories

## **Ethical Considerations – reflecting on the walls**

### **Safety and well being of the young people**

The walls of silence had prevailed in my own life for many years, and I had come to recognise that this had been entirely detrimental to my mental health and ability to come to an understanding of my life. I did, therefore, view the opinion of those who decry reflecting and talking about past experience and sharing it with those who will listen, as being out of touch with the consequences of abuse. However, I also recognised that as I embarked on this research, that I had to move carefully and sensitively. Every part of this research was carefully thought out, with thorough discussions with other professionals in the field before any step was taken.

From the writing of the first draft of my research proposal to the writing of the Coda in my final thesis I was constantly thinking about and questioning the rightness of my course in relation to the safety and well being of the young people. This involved talking to and working with specialist professionals in relation to who the young people could be, where the interviews would take place, the informed consent form for both the young person and her/his parent or carer, the feasible length of the interviews, the supervision of any young people waiting to be interviewed, the follow up support, the involvement of the young people in the dissemination of their stories and the hopes and wishes of the young people in the research as a whole.

### **Vulnerability of the young people**

The ethical considerations, inherent in an ideographic enquiry such as this, are complex and of great concern, with many added considerations, which of necessity, must be afforded the young people (Simons & Usher 2000). As has been made clear, the young people participating in the study have all been witnesses of domestic violence and abuse, have received professional support and, according to research findings, have probably been caused great distress and confusion (Dobash & Dobash 1984 cited by Hester et al 2000; Pahl 1985; Saunders 1994). They were usually or typically in the same or next room during an attack on their mother (Hughes 1992), and have possibly been abused themselves as domestic violence is a strong indicator of child abuse (Walby & Allen 2004; Saunders 1994; Edelson 1999).

The resultant vulnerability of these young people has to be at the fore front of thinking and planning, with their well being constantly in the mind of the researcher. First, at the heart of this study is the need to put the best interest of each young person as paramount. Focussing on the purpose and justification of decision making, it is hoped that thoughtful, respectful decisions will be the result, which are based upon "principled sensitivity to the rights of others" (Kuper 1987: 18). The sensitivity surrounding the subject of domestic violence and the resulting vulnerability of the young people must be a major concern, and this must be encompassed within the methodology and aims of the research.

## **Positions of Power**

My position of power, relative to the young people, needs to be addressed with the view that there exists a partnership between us which will result in a dual constructed outcome, which is formed from the initial encounters through to the final analysis. Scheurich (1997) states that there is always an asymmetry of power within the interview situation. The play of power does not lead to total dominance or control. He argues that those with less power are not simply trapped. They will find many creative and powerful ways to resist inequality. His view is that the researched will “carve out space of their own, so that they can control some or part of the interview” (1997: 71).

This does have ethical implications as it would appear that there is, within the interviewing process, room for the expression of individuality through resistance to the power of the researcher. Further to this, there are present so many indeterminate and individualistic aspects beyond the dominance/resistance theory contained within the interview situation, the researcher will need to be aware of the “complex play of the conscious and the unconscious thoughts, feelings, fears, power, desires and needs” (ibid: 73) of all those involved.

The researcher holds the moral responsibility of accepting that within the interview and interpretive process there is indeterminate ambiguity which cannot be controlled. I agree with the theory that positions of power are illusive, transitory and influenced by many factors. However, if my desire is to work towards the personal autonomy of each of the young people, the perceived imbalance of power in some way should be opposed. My



power rests on my being an adult, a so called 'expert', a person who has instigated the interview, a person who is asking the questions and a person who is unknown. All of these characteristics lend power to my position.

In contrast, the young people are younger, vulnerable and 'in the spotlight'. There appears to be a strong power imbalance in favour of the researcher. An effort can be made to shift the balance of power. This idea is supported by Mishler (cited by Scheurich 1997) who stated that power could be given by the researcher to the researched. There are ways whereby this can be accomplished.

### **Informed decision and choice**

Within the methodology, room can be made for informed decision making on the part of the young people. They needed to know the purpose of the research, and be fully informed as to what was required of them and their invaluable contribution would need to be acknowledged and appreciated (Alderson & Morrow 2004). Westcott & Davies (1996) emphasise the need of a commitment to actively involve young people in decision making which affects their lives. This involvement would in some measure be achieved by seeking to invite them to participate in the study without pressurising them, and they would feel that there is always an option to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time. The approach to the young people would have to be carefully planned, with a consciousness that this may only be ethically accomplished through the intervention of a trusted 'gatekeeper'.

Empowerment of these young people is an overt aim, as I search for ways to impress autonomous principles and free expression into the research design. This, in my view, can only be achieved through a caring commitment to the young people. This commitment might be exhibited through the provision of the information, power and tools to the young people which would enable them to have a say in how the outcome of the research should be used. The young people's input would demonstrate the researcher's belief in respecting the rights and abilities of disadvantaged, marginalised young people. In this way, the co-construction of the research might prevail through data collection to the final analysis and dissemination. Democratic and principles of emancipation would determine decision making and roles as the research evolved through to its conclusion (Alderson & Morrow 2004).

### **Commitment to care**

Through a commitment to a considerate and caring stance, I hoped to create a situation in which they young people felt safe, respected and empowered. White (1991) uses the phrase 'attentive care' to describe an epistemology which supports the idea of "a much stronger injunction to listen to the other" (1991: 88). Care in this context is describing a relationship which allows each member freedom to 'be'. It is allowing the other to be different. It is giving close attention without suffocation. The attentive stance of the researcher is applied with care to enable the young people to feel safe and valued without feeling trapped. This can only be accomplished as long as the needs and wishes of the young people are ascertained and acted upon.

Care has other definitions. For my purpose, care is a sense of feeling solicitude, and contains within it a degree of consideration which enables the recipient to be fully autonomous. Care, above all, has emotional content, and as such, requires an honest attachment to the other, which may be called empathy (Standing 1998). The full scope of care can only be achieved with what Solomon called “an understanding heart” (1 Kings 3: 9). As the aim of this study is to ‘understand’ the changing experiences of individuals in their daily lives, there is a personal basis to the interpretative process, which is formed out of the social interactions between researched and researcher (Mauthner 1998). The researcher’s heart is engaged in these relationships and also in the endeavour (Weis et al. 1998). How she deals with what Ribbens describes as “the emotional effect on me” (1998: 50), will also require careful attention, as she considers her role and how much of herself and her feelings she should or will expose to the young people and to the public gaze.

### **Ethics and feminist research**

The subjectivity inherent in a feminist qualitative endeavour has ethical implications (Ribbens & Edwards 1998). Just as autonomy, agency and individuality are celebrated and embraced in relation to the young people in this research, there must be a corresponding effort expended towards the researcher. Philosophical evidence presented by Foucault and developed by Donzelot (1991) stress that subjectivity is a creative process, and is a kind of realised potential. My ownership of the research and my presence within it will depend upon my taking “moral responsibility for the construction” of myself as subject (Hekman 1995: 83). This self creating subject is therefore capable of

resistance, and the ethical stance would preclude domination as far as is possible.

Foucault argues that in order for each of us to be an ethical being, “we must figure out the practice of freedom and how to employ it” (ibid: 84).

### **My moral voice**

The presentation of my subjectivity in the form of autobiographical insights, interpretative processes and personal ‘baggage’ would require the use of my ‘moral voice’ to make decisions about what should be included or explained according to underlying purposes. Questioning about the reasons for inclusion and for what purpose would act as a form of safeguard against reckless subjectivity. Decisions around revealing self revolve around human rights. Intrusion into the private lives of others contains dilemmas which mirror the researcher’s need to determine her motivation in exploring others’ private lives. Her voice and her interpretations of others’ voices and their inclusion must be founded upon sound ethical motives.

Finally, care needs to be seen as a meticulous attitude which must prevail during an endeavour as sensitive and precarious as scaling a wall built around domestic violence. Anyone who has attempted a challenging climb will know, it requires precise and measured movements if there is to be any hope of success. Care becomes essentially thoughtful and more technical, but remains unpredictable, for mistakes and deviations are sometimes made when there is a struggle, a challenge or human frailties. The unpredictable nature of an ideographic study such as this results in many inconsistencies, ambiguities and tensions which might lead to feelings of anxiety or uncertainty (Ribbens

1998). The researcher may sometimes feel unsure as to her position and the way forward. There will be many questions which will require careful reflection. I needed to retain flexibility within my approach as I assessed the impact of the research upon the young people and myself (Birch 1998).

### **Qualitative research and ethics**

Qualitative reflexive research, by its very nature, raises ethical questions which are bound up with the potential of the methodology to shape the lives of the young people as well as my own life. "When we become characters in their stories, we change their stories" (Denzin & Lincoln 1998b: 169). My personal accountability demands that my attention should be drawn continuously to the effects of what I am doing on the young people. Through reflection and a constant reappraisal of the consequences of the study, I shall be mindful of the perspectives of the young people as to whether they are fully and fairly represented. With every decision, there has to be an ethical dimension which embraces openness and honesty.

I owe my care to the young people and how my research text may shape their lives as well as my own. In this way it is necessary for me to substantiate my interpretations with a reflexive account of myself and the processes and decisions I have followed. My moral stance must be one focussed on a willingness to learn, to understand from a starting point of not knowing. I will need to possess a receptiveness to those things which are being conveyed to me. With this responsibility, there is a moral obligation to provide the means for the young people to articulate their views, feelings and insights as effectively

as possible. The ethos permeating the 'speech situation' would need to feel safe, respectful and open, allowing the young people to feel a sense of their own value.

### **Autobiographical and personal concerns**

Respect for their rights is a legal obligation which finds expression in providing opportunities for them to be heard (Alderson 2000). There is an important ethical issue around my own experience of domestic violence. My own story might possess resonances of the stories I am listening to. I might make an assumption that my pain and problems will be echoed by these other stories. There is the potential danger of my dumping my pain and problems onto the young people (Parr 1998). Adversely, aspects of their stories which do resonate might incur an unnatural, unfounded amount of attention, either too much or too little. There will need to be constant attention given to a subjective understanding of the reflexive processes as the stories unfold (Holland et al. 1995).

My assumptions embedded in my own experience and described by Scheurich (1997) as 'baggage', cannot be excluded from my efforts. Postmodernist theory describes a willingness to be open about our subjectivity, and unashamedly put ourselves 'in the frame'. The dilemmas this produces, along with the reflexive monitoring of every step taken, will need to be attended to, reflected upon, analysed and recorded.

As I listened to the young people there were times when I was unsure as to whether to probe further, or to show restraint. Dilemmas of this kind punctuate the thought

processes, as emotionality and sensitivity play their part. Deception of any kind would be entirely inappropriate. Openness to elicit implicit trust must be a hallmark of this study. Throughout, I remained mindful of any distress which might be caused that I might act in a way which demonstrated my desire to incorporate a truly listening ethos, communicating trust, respect, patience, sincerity, openness and a non-judgmental approach.

There were also ethical concerns around the possibility of young people choosing to disclose present or ongoing abuse. The planning stages leading up to the interviews required the inclusion of this possibility. First, the decision was made to interview only those young people who are no longer experiencing domestic violence and abuse. There is a continuing debate around the issue of adversely affecting the safety of children and young people through interventions which increase the likelihood of children and young people being drawn into the abuse. Secondly, the ethical concerns contained in a study of young people's experiences of domestic violence are challenging even when it is known that they are no longer living with the violence. The resultant decision was based on the understandable fear that the research might increase the vulnerability of the young people and the danger surrounding the young people.

However, despite the choice to interview young people who have become survivors, the possibility of disclosure was still present, and provision had to be considered and devised. This was addressed in two ways. First, familiarity with the child protection policy of agencies involved in the research was included in preparation. Second, the young people

had ongoing support available to them during and after the interviews. This was in the form of the continued regular contact with the support worker who had been working with them for some time. This support was available for as long as the young person felt that s/he needed it. It was hoped that strong relationships between the agencies involved and the researcher would also contribute to the support of the young people. Further detail in relation to the practicalities of data collection is contained in chapter two part two.

### **Gaining consent**

Efforts to gain access to the young people of the research were centred on statutory and voluntary agencies working directly with young people. This was done because it was imperative to be transparent and entirely open about what the research was aiming to do. This was carried through to the agreements which were used to bring about an understanding of the research, so that the young people could make an informed choice. This together with the consent form were designed to inform the young people and their parents of the purpose of the research, the contribution which the young people would be asked to make, and the important additional information that they would not have to answer any questions if they did not want to. This paper work is presented in the Appendices.

There is a moral obligation resting on the researcher to convey honesty and openness throughout the research process. In this way, there was an open discussion between the researcher and agencies which might lead to the possibility of approaching young people



to ask for their involvement. Professional integrity coupled with clarity were required, to ensure the safety and protection of the young people.

The safety of the young people remained a constant concern. They were informed that the interviews were entirely confidential, and pseudonyms would be used unless the young people decided otherwise. In the event of a disclosure which raised child protection concerns, each young person was aware through preliminary preparation with their worker that these concerns would have to be shared with other professionals in order to safeguard the children concerned. In this way, the young people understood that confidentiality in these circumstances could not prevail.

### **Confidentiality**

When translating the private stories of vulnerable young people into a public interpretive critique, the possible damage caused to individuals through their recognition by past abusers must govern how the interpretations are reached and communicated. The final text must be a sensitive embodiment of the promised confidentiality based on the trust which has been developed between the researcher, the agencies involved and the young people. This trust is fundamental to an ethical study. This might be achieved through the researcher being approachable, through a two way communication, through the researcher showing herself to be human by revealing personal aspects of herself. In a study such as this where there is little opportunity for relationship and trust building because of lack of time, it is hoped that the trusting relationships already established with the young people by those agencies which have supported them will have a positive

effect on creating a trusting ethos which will overspill into the research as a whole. The support of the agencies will be of great importance in establishing trust (Mullender 2005). As I seek in some measure to contribute something which is good and worthy, which is relevant and which has some bearing on the development of knowledge, the ethical constraints remain constant, never varying but remaining as a guide, protection and focal point, ensuring the well being of the young people.

*And to those, who like me wish more than they can say, to see an end to domestic abuse, I give this testimony. The emotional cost of this research has been great; there is little chance of it being allowed to fade away... the discomfort, anger, sadness, and loathing generated by domestic violence which have sustained and motivated me so far have not evaporated. If anything, the emotional power of this work has increased my desire to show young people what has been achieved by them and others.*

### **Ethics and actions**

- ensured the safety of the young people was main priority
- agreement and consent forms completed
- close liaison with professional working with young people
- safe place familiar to young people obtained for interviews
- semi structured interviews to enable young people to freely express their stories
- confidentiality of identity of young people maintained
- wishes of young people discussed with them
- child protection procedures adhered to throughout

## **Chapter Two Part Two**

### **Data Collection: the climb begins**

My aim was to interview a small number of young people who had experienced domestic violence using a semi structured format. I knew that my primary concern was the safety and well being of the young people, and so the setting up and completion of the interviews would need to be done in such a way as to ensure that both their well being and safety were fully considered and carefully guarded.

#### **The young people**

The initial enquiry was made to Children's Services in Hampshire, and a contact by letter was achieved with the Manager of a 'Children in Need' Team. Her support for my research was achieved, but a sample of young people was not identified at this stage. Later, a chance encounter with a refuge worker led to contact with a support worker who worked for an agency in the south west of England which describes itself as a support service 'working with families and tackling domestic abuse'. Within days a meeting was set up. This meeting proved to be very exciting because I felt that the worker was very keen and wanted to support research with children and young people. The gate was opened and it led to a meeting with a group of young people who had all received support from the worker.

Each young person gave up their time to spend a morning with me, waiting for their turn to have their interview, and then finally, we all had lunch together. When it was time to

leave, I thanked the young people for the privilege of being able to hear their stories. As I left I thanked the worker who said, as we parted, "It's ok, I want to know how young people feel". That was a significant remark which has remained with me during the eighteen months of reading and data analysis since that time. During that time I have reflected upon one young person's courageous statement, "I want to talk about it and hopefully let it help other people" (Coral: 19). My response has been to be committed to try and do all I can to disseminate the words and the stories of the young people to as many young people and others as I can.

The young people were aged between 12 and 15. They were two young women aged 14 and 15, and three young men aged 12 and 13. They were all of white British ethnicity. One young person did not come for the interviews because her mother did not give consent. The original plan was to interview them twice, but the feasibility of this in relation to the practicalities on both sides to get together a second time, proved too difficult. The possibility of completing pilot interviews beforehand proved unfeasible due to constraints on my time and also on the support worker's time. I had completed in depth interviews previously with young people on another sensitive topic, and this in some measure had increased my awareness of the care needed to complete the interviews. However, this was not an ideal position to be in, and retrospectively it would have strengthened this research if I had been possible to complete some interviews as a pilot.

The young people had all been supported by one worker for at least a year. After the initial meeting with me, the worker had approached the parents of six young people to tell

them about my study and to ask for their permission to approach their children, and had used the introductory statement to explain the research to them, and the agreement form was then gone through and signed by the young person giving their consent to be interviewed. The introductory statement and the agreement form are reproduced in the appendix.

The interviews took the form of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, and were twenty minutes in length. The length was decided upon because all the young people would have to wait for their interview, and it felt unfair to expect them to wait for more than two hours. The interviews took place at a venue which was familiar to the young people, which was risk assessed as being safe, and which provided a space which allowed for confidentiality. Child protection policies held by the voluntary organisation and Hampshire County Council were adhered to and explained to each young person before the interviews. Complete confidentiality existed except when a disclosure relating to child protection occurred. It was understood that if, in the course of the interviews, a disclosure was made indicating a child or young person was at risk and was in need of protection, that the concern would be taken beyond the interview room, through the designated channel advocated by the policies.

### **Interview themes**

Decisions about the breadth and depth of the range of issues associated with the interviews were carefully considered. As a general guide, it was recognised that it might be necessary to sacrifice breadth for depth, because of the relatively short amount of time

allowed for the interviews. The interviews, although short, did provide very rich data, and although there was some discussion about whether or not the length of interview was adequate, the final decision to stay with one twenty minute interview, was based on the depth of the resultant stories.

This was achieved through the structure of the interviews being formalised around a very narrow range of three topics which were family, coping strategies and feelings. These themes were selected as they were closely associated with the research questions. The themes were developed by each young person in that they were free to follow their own thinking without interruption, having been provided with a space for personal disclosures and reflections. The effort to deliberately steer the interview towards a specific theme was kept to a minimum. The structural format is shown in the appendices.

### **Support after the interviews**

The young people, at the conclusion of the interviews, were supported by their worker, and were given an opportunity to discuss the interview during the following week. They had all expressed a wish to have a copy of any written piece based on their stories. They also expressed a wish to have a piece of work which would be specifically designed for young people. All the young people received a poster designed by another young person who had experienced domestic violence, and which expressed their words on domestic violence, their feelings and their ways of coping. A copy of this poster can be found in Appendix A. Two weeks after the interviews, and again two weeks after that, I contacted the worker to check that all the young people were alright. The worker confirmed that

they were all doing well, and that he had observed that the young people had viewed the interviews in a positive light.

The sensitivity around all the experiences associated with domestic violence, which raises huge ethical concerns, remained at the heart of the implementation of the research, with a constant focus on the safety and well being of each young person.

### **A safe place**

The place chosen for the interviews was a centre owned by Children and Family Services which was familiar to all the young people. It was where they had had meetings with the support worker, and it was friendly and comfortable. There was a lounge area where there was a pool table, and a kitchen leading off from it where the young people could make drinks and have snacks. The worker stayed with the young people throughout, and they made their own decisions as to which order they would be interviewed. They all seemed to have a fun time with the worker because they came into the interview room which was just down the corridor happy and relaxed. When listening to the recording of the interviews later the sound of pool balls striking each other and being potted can be clearly heard, but I was totally unaware of it during the interviews! There appeared to be no distractions at all as we were able to give the conversation our full attention. The interviews were remarkable. The preparation for them had been long and thoughtful.

### **Conversation flow**

The semi-structured interview schedule which had been constructed as a guide was generally adhered to, but in a flexible way. I did feel that the conversations flowed and remained alive throughout. I had prepared myself to go where the young people took me, to follow their thinking and to be taught by them (Tesch 1990). I listened as closely as I could without the kind of intensity that would have created tension (Davie et al. 1996). I tried to reflect back as much as I could, to probe a little deeper if I was prompted to do so. Sometimes I allowed the conversation to shift, and to change direction. This occurred naturally and generally without noticeable breaks. All the time I attempted to keep the research aims in mind, to prevent a loss of focus (Mason 1998).

Twenty minutes is not a long time but it proved just enough. Although I did not have a clock in front of me, it was remarkable that each of the interviews were just a few seconds over the prescribed time. I felt the interviews had come to a close in the time of the young person (Scheurich 1997). Each interview ended with my giving each young person a reminder that the interview was almost over and requesting them to add anything they wanted to say which had not already been said. Two of the young people did take advantage of this offer, and talked for a minute or two before the interview was closed. In both cases, I felt that what was being added was very important to the young person, and could not be left out.



### **Informed consent**

The preparation had been undertaken with each young person and his or her mother by the support worker. Previously, my meeting with him had resulted in his having a clear understanding of what the research's aims were and what was expected of the young people. The paper work had been reviewed. A clear outline of the research plus the necessary consent forms and agreement had all been looked at and agreed. These are reproduced in the Appendix. The worker had given as much time as was needed by each young person, to fully discuss the research before the necessary consent was asked for. Only one young person who had been approached failed to agree.

Once the informed consent had been achieved, it was necessary to set up a suitable venue and time for the interviews. This was all done by the worker, who notified me as soon as each had been arranged, to check that the place, date and times were acceptable. There were no problems experienced with the organisation.

### **Interview questions and structure**

The structure of the interviews required considerable thought and planning with a view to meet the needs of the young people who were telling their stories and the needs of the research which was to meet the prescribed aims (Denzin & Lincoln 1998b). In respect of meeting the needs of the young people, to help them feel at ease, and to enable them to express themselves without being 'led' by me, it was necessary to provide a space for them to establish the impression that the interviews were held in their hands and not in mine, and that I was learning from them. Each interview opened with a general question

which was designed to put them at their ease and allow them to talk about something which would be emotionally undemanding. Each interview began with the question, "Can you tell me a little bit about your family?" This proved to be too general for some of the young people, and so I added a further explanation if it was required. "Who is there in your family?" This question led on to whether or not they had any pets. This question was asked because, for many children and young people, the loss and possession of pets is quite a significant area of experience. Again, it was hoped that this would prove to be generally non-threatening and would assist the young person in feeling ok at the beginning of the interview as it was all about sharing facts rather than feelings.

Also, the purpose of these questions was to assist me in getting to know the significant people in each of the young people's lives so that I would have some understanding of who they would later talk about. This did clarify the relationships in the families and did largely avert confusion.

The factual elements of their stories were focused on further, by encouraging each young person to "Tell me about yourself" with additional prompts such as "Where have you lived? Have you moved home at all? Have you changed schools? What do you do in your spare time? What do you like best at school?" As these questions were asked, close attention was given to anything which might echo the main themes of the research which were coping and support. As and when attention was drawn to a particular element of their stories, an effort was made to draw these out and develop them by reflecting back and prompting the young person to explain further. In this way, the young people were

encouraged to develop their stories and think about their experiences in particular ways, but all the time there was an attempt to allow the young person to develop their own thinking through simply reflecting back what they said.

There was a prevailing emphasis throughout the interviews which was sounding out how the young people felt about their experiences. They all understood that the purpose of the interviews was to talk about their experiences of domestic violence and abuse, and this naturally began to occur as they talked about the people in their lives. The idea of reflecting on their experiences was central to the structure of the interviews. I used the words "I wonder" many times as I gently tried to ask them to reflect on how they felt at the time of the violence and abuse and how they felt about their families.

Their ways of coping were asked about directly once the young person had disclosed some of their experiences of abuse. I was concerned that there should not be too much lingering around pain and suffering and more time spent reflecting on what they actually did to manage and cope. There was also an opportunity to think about the support they had received which they saw as beneficial and which had helped them to cope.

This was the structure of the interviews with a predisposition to allow the young person a chance to follow their own thinking and wishes so that hopefully they did not feel pressurised in any particular way. This was crucial to this research effort and supported a "meaningful power sharing" (Maguire 1987: 89). The involvement of the young people in the research lies at its heart, and the openness which is characteristic of their

participation and the interview structure creates this possibility. This research can therefore act as a challenge to “all forms of oppression” (ibid: 212).

### **Ending the interviews**

In concluding the interviews, it was necessary to warn the young people that the end was coming, and a general question was offered at this time to encourage them to speak of anything that had not been talked about which they felt they needed to share before the end. Three of the young people took the opportunity to add elements to their story which had not been covered.

### **My experience as interviewer**

The interviews followed one another with a short interval in between while the next young person was fetched from the lounge. There was no time at all to consider what had been said. There was no opportunity to reflect on what had happened. I was, however, left with an overall impression of how each of the interviews had gone. Some had naturally felt more comfortable than others, in that some of the young people were able to respond without difficulty to my questions.

One of the interviews proved to be more intense because I was very aware throughout of the young person's tense demeanour and his feelings of anger which clearly had not been fully eradicated. This interview was more challenging in that it seemed likely that at any point the young person would deviate from what was being asked, and revert completely to incidents which focussed on the intensity of his feelings in relation to the perpetrator.

Now, I do not feel that this interview was in any way compromised by what happened. It indicated to me that perhaps the young person was more in the grip of disempowering emotions, and therefore his story had a deep relevance and authenticity.

“So, the question may be asked: should research be designed to address and reinforce the aims and interests of the dominant group in order to bring the rest into harmony; or should it be designed to be inclusive of all the viewpoints of the multitude of individuals and thus accept diversity, difference, disagreements and conflict” (Schostak & Schostak 2008: 34)? The problem had been with my view of ‘controlling’ the interview. I knew that I would need to give up any desire to control the individuality of the person’s story, and also that I might possess an unconscious desire to create a comfortable harmony and consensus which I would need to question and challenge within myself. I thought I would need to maintain order for the stories to evolve and unfold. The opposite is however true. Some structure was necessary, but the framing of the interviews could not take precedent over the wishes of the young people.

Tension did exist between maintaining the structure and allowing the young people full rein. However, this has to be expected. “The fundamental tension is between the enchainment of individuals .... versus the freedom of individuals to express and act according to their desires, interests, needs ....” (ibid: 35).

Another important consideration is that the young people did not know me at all and I did not know them. I had not asked for nor been given any information about the young

people. On the morning of the interviews I met with complete strangers. They knew a little about me but their knowledge was limited to why I wanted to meet with them. This does raise some issues around certain aspects of the interviews and there may have been several causes of difficulties which I noticed at the time. For example, one of the young people spoke very quietly. I had difficulty hearing her responses at first. I have reflected since that this would have probably been rectified if I'd known her and would have been tuned in more to the way she spoke. Possibly, her quietness had been brought on by shyness and self consciousness as she was called upon to talk about the most intimate and emotional aspects of her life.

Another challenge was related to understanding and connecting with one another. Because she was unfamiliar with the way I talk and the way I think, a few times she was unsure of what I was asking, and I had to rephrase my questions, using different language. Communication between strangers is coloured by uncertainty and anxiety. However, the difficulties were overcome because the young people had been well prepared.

The morning ended with a relaxing lunch in a friendly restaurant nearby. The young people chatted amongst themselves, and laughed and joked. They enjoyed their food, and lingered for a while. At the time I felt they just liked being together, and felt comfortable with one another. As far as I know it was the first time that they had been altogether, and yet they seemed to know each other really well.

It was time to leave, and so arrangements were made to get each of the young people to their homes. I was able to take two of the young people home.

The interviews had provided me a glimpse into “the inner life of the person” (Denzin & Lincoln 1998a: 24). There is no “clear window” however into that life, only an offering of an account or story, full of subtle variations, ambiguities and complexities of human experience (ibid: 24).

### **Transcription**

Once the interviews were completed, the first task was to listen to the recordings and check that they had been successful. Once this was established, transcribing from the recordings began. This was a long and laborious undertaking, with numberless checks and rewinds to establish the accuracy of the transcripts. Many decisions had to be made in relation to how the stories of the young people became the written word (Standing 1998). However, a crucial decision was made to keep the transcripts whole, and this had a critical effect on the subsequent analysis. From a background of working within the parameters of Grounded Theory, I shifted my gaze more towards the ideas of Mauthner & Doucet (1998) and became more absorbed by the enigmatic ‘feeling voice’ (Ribbens 1998).

Transcribing the interviews into written texts proved problematic technically, and thought provoking and emotional as my personal connection to the individuals and their stories developed and intensified. There were many decisions which had to be made about how the

transcripts were to be formed. The pause, the thinking time, the hesitation, the silence, the stumble, any uncertainty all could be recorded in the same way and yet they were very different. Would a few full stops suffice? Or should I try to differentiate them to provide a transcript which was more faithful and detailed? I inevitably opted for the former. I opted for simplicity, but I realised that I needed to remember the nuances, the differences in motivation and the variation in responses and silences in such a way that it would enhance my understanding and interpretative power later. The only way I might achieve this was through immersing myself so thoroughly in the recordings that later, as I read the transcripts I could hear in my head the young person saying the words. The voice becomes part of the transcript.

In this way, the analysis, which had been gently germinating at the time of the interviews, was now beginning to fully take root. Transcribing is a painstaking process which took many hours of concentrated listening and reviewing. The interviews were relatively short, but they still required intense effort. All the time I was wondering about the faithfulness of what I was transcribing. There was uncertainty and blurring around parts of the conversations. When I was unsure, after listening many, many times, I chose not to include responses which I could not clarify. I was aware that there was danger in 'guessing' and I could not entertain that idea. Finally, as the transcripts were completed, there were mixed feelings.

I rejoiced that the words were in print; the empowerment associated with the printed word seemed very evident. However, these feelings were mixed with an anxious



supposition that the transcriptions would always lack some essential elements, perhaps a defining characteristic of the young person or the depth of intimate exchanges which can only be felt at the moment of expression. I was aware of these losses and reflected that I could accept them only because I had earnestly tried to respect every word given to me.

The dialogue process had been rewarding for me, and I hoped for the young people. The emotional revelations and expressions had been shared. I was amazed at the intimate information that had been disclosed. I had sought not to be detached, but had quietly reacted to their disclosures with what I hoped they would see and feel as empathic understanding (Jessop & Penny 1998). I felt excited at what I was learning, and also humbled in that I recognised very quickly the enormous privilege it was for me to be there and listening. The identity of each young person has been protected. The transcriptions possess the concealment of names and significant places. When quotes from the transcripts were used during the interpretive analysis, their names have been changed to Scott, Coral, Karl, Terry & Rose, and these names were used to define the storyteller.

Analysis had seemed to begin even before the interviews began. The process of the research had affected me. At times I felt emotionally exhausted, because I had not been able to hide from myself (Maguire 1987: 154). As the process of research had unfolded, not only was I analysing the contradictions and complexities of the young people's lives but I was also examining the contradictions and dilemmas in my own life (ibid: 157). From the beginning, as Maguire reports, "Emotionally, I was in deep" (1987: 169).

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Analysis: views through a chink in the wall**

The effort of the researcher to reach the top of the wall of silence has been great, and filled with optimism, which is reflected in the belief that a view from the top could be achieved. However, the view which has been achieved has been partial and clearly limited in relation to breaking the silence. Nevertheless, as the journey has moved forward, and as the process of analysis unfolded, I believe a chink in the wall has been created, through which some observations may be realised and some understandings and meanings can be interpreted. The following is a description of the analysis which was carried out with some discussion around the decisions and choices which were made during the process.

#### **Analysis and 'voice'**

Analysis has involved four different layers of analysis which have been founded on a specific method of immersion into the data, described in the methodology, which is based on a voice centred relational method of analysis (Mauthner & Doucet 1998). As the analysis unfolded, through the different stages, beginning with the direction which was specifically described and carried out by Mauthner & Doucet (1998), a choice was made early on in the analysis, to follow and develop the category of 'voice' without including the relational aspect.. This development was due to a subjective desire to investigate the complexity of 'voice', as, early on in the analysis, my attention and interest had been drawn to the varied and expressive voices of the young people. The following is a

Analysis: views through a chink in the wall: voice relational analysis and 'feeling' voices

description of how I followed the voice centred relational methodology in the early stages, and then developed my analysis beyond the recommendations of Mauthner & Doucet (1998). An important research question was focused on the feelings of the young people, and the analysis does critically reflect my desire to understand the emotional journey of young people through suffering and to answer in some measure the aims of the research. This part of the analysis description explains the first two layers. The third and fourth layers of the analysis are contained in subsequent parts entitled, 'Views through a chink in the wall: competency in coping' and 'Scenes through a chink in the wall: voices, views and visions'.

Each layer is presented as independent and encapsulated. However, the voice of a young person in a single phrase may express a coping strategy, an emotional outpouring exhibiting a complexity of feelings, a spiritual connection and a significant event within their story. In this way, their words are sometimes interpreted as multi layered and convergent, overlapping in meaning and recursive in nature. The power of their stories lies in the deep layers of interpretive understandings which surface and blend through the four layers.

### **Layer one of analysis – forming case studies**

The first approach, based on Mauthner & Doucet's (1998) ideas, led to the formation of a case study for each young person which highlights their own particular and individual voice or voices.

The following is a data analysis based on the concept of voice relational analysis described by Mauthner & Doucet (1998) who assert that the strength of qualitative research lies in the competence with which analysis is carried out. There is a need to make explicit where I am in relation to the young people. This means that I must acknowledge the critical role I play in creating and interpreting the conversations. The issues around reflexivity, as discussed in Chapter Two Part One, are central to this method of analysis as specifically it is addressed along with power, voice and authority (ibid: 121). Mauthner & Doucet recognised that "little attention has been given" to these issues in the past (1998: 121).

The analysis was also greatly influenced by feminist scholars, and a pivotal concern was to listen to people 'in and on their own terms' in order to gain some understanding of their lives (Mauthner & Doucet 1998: 120).

The approach to analysis is voice centred and based firmly within a relational ontology. The view of human nature is one of interdependence, with a fundamental need to understand individuals within their social context. It follows therefore, that an attempt was made to explain stories in terms of the young people's relationships to people around them, and then, to broaden this explanation to the social, structural and cultural contexts of their lives. This analysis remains individualistic, however, as variable aspects needed to be recognised and interpreted. The first layer is here described, with the culminating case studies.

The first approach was one of examining each of the stories for images, events, contradictions and storyline. As an integral part of this preliminary examination, it was necessary to reflect upon the relationship which existed between the young person and the researcher. Reflexive and subjective feelings needed to be reflected upon and there was a need to make "explicit where I am located in relation to my research respondents" (Mauthner & Doucet 1998: 121). This was then layered with an examination of the transcripts for interpersonal relationships which were highlighted. This was followed by the examination of each story looking for experiences which reflect a broader social, political or cultural context. The final process of immersion in the transcripts was to draw on all the previous steps and attempt a case study for each of the young people examining in greater depth the tensions, the characteristics, the anomalies and complexities of their voices.

## **Each young person's story – first layer of analysis**

### **Scott – 14 year old boy**

The domestic violence went on for a long time in Scott's life. He had protected his younger brothers and sisters by taking them out of the danger. Sometimes, he was prompted to intervene, but feelings of fear would sometimes prevent him. He had seen his mother hurt. He had felt that he knew when the violent episodes were going to happen, and this had been "weird". He had thought when he was younger that domestic violence was acceptable, and he had been abusive to his mother. His awakening to the error of his thinking came suddenly when the police were called to his home because of his violent behaviour. He decided to change, and he had been told by more than one support worker that he has really improved. He had learnt to value his experiences, and wanted to use them to help others.

He had gained knowledge of how to support other people from a teacher in particular, and he had found that he was good at emulating what he had received, and making a difference to people around him. He viewed these skills as something he would take into the future, and use working as a support worker. At present he is happy at home, school is improving as he supports his friends, and he has found strategies which have helped him deal with his feelings. He has used drawing and time-out to express and dispel powerful emotions. He feels more in control, and is enjoying family life. One aspect has been to go to church with his family.

I began by feeling quite nervous as Scott was very keen to be interviewed first, and I didn't want to let him down. As the conversation developed, I felt a growing respect for Scott, because he came across as being utterly honest and ready to acknowledge the things that he felt he did wrong. I felt his willingness to help me and others very strongly throughout. I recognised his thoughtfulness, but at the same time, he always kept completely to the point, and never strayed away from the main thrust of our conversation. I felt he wanted to make a difference, to be involved in changing things for the better. He spoke of his skills without conceit. His clarity about where his life was now going seemed to have evolved naturally and without force. Intellectually, I felt very much at ease with him, because I knew he was listening and thinking. He paused quite a lot, and this proved to be helpful in sorting out a misunderstanding and developing the conversation into revealing areas.

Emotionally, I did not feel really relaxed with Scott. Probably this was due to this being the first conversation, but I did feel less self conscious as the conversation evolved. I became more receptive to Scott, and less concerned about the structure of the conversation. As Scott related his story, I was impressed by his courage, his fortitude, self reliance, inner strength and personal awareness. He appeared to me to have been empowered by the support he had been given. I imagined several moments of his story as he related them to me. First, the image of him protecting his siblings filled me with respect for him.

Analysis: views through a chink in the wall: voice relational analysis and 'feeling' voices

Second, the image of him being involved with the police invoked a strong feeling of wanting to protect him, but at the same time recognising the need for his mother to be protected. I then felt that it was the best thing that could have happened to him, as it awakened him to a sense of the wrongfulness of what he had been doing. When he spoke of his future hopes, I felt myself identifying closely with what he was saying as I too am motivated to do what I am doing because of similar reasoning.

### **CASE STUDY of Scott**

At this stage of data analysis, I have decided to use themes based on the idea of singular voice and multiple voices to begin my immersion into the data. I have gained some basic insights and understandings from the three readings. Now, I want to take the idea of voice to interpret the data in a way which will combine my understandings thus far and take them into a deeper and more creative dimension.

I have chosen three aspects of voice which I describe as Scott's hurting voice, his healing voice and finally, his knowing voice.

"I was always harsh towards my family"

Scott recounts his feelings about the way he treated his family. As he reflected upon what he felt as past 'misdemeanours', he recognised the hurt he was passing on to those close to him.

"I stayed out of the way for quite a while".

Hurt can and does result in withdrawal from those things which deepen the hurt. Scott withdrew from those who shared his pain. He acknowledged the exchange of painful feelings which added to the weight of abuse. The hurt which was his alone remained



intact. His motives were not clear to him, but he expressed something which seems to support the idea that he wanted to protect others as well as himself.

"Wanted to be my own person....I need time to act like a child".

His feelings of hurt found expression in his worries. The perpetrator was never far away, like a spy who would be interested in what he was saying, Scott lived in fear of being found out.

"...would the person using domestic violence and everything, find out....um....about what I was saying and stuff".

The 'stuff' he feared we can only guess at, but it is clear there was a lot of anxiety caused by hurt which found expression in "was n't talking". 'Staying out of the way' can be expressed in different ways and perhaps the least obvious way is to withhold your voice.

A hurting voice may be an absent, silenced voice. Scott's feelings around hurt were heightened and found expression in what he termed "weird" experiences. There was something unexplained about what was happening within him, but he recognised that something powerful was happening, because he had possession of unexpected abilities which proved to be of help when he was confronted by violent incidents.

"I felt I could but there was something holding me back like....fear or something...."

"...It was getting really bad....getting really bad, so I knew it was going to happen".

Scott voices his hurt through out the conversation. It remains almost to the end, as is particularly expressed by the repetition of "getting really bad". There were moments

when Scott underplayed the hurt, because the hurt was still remembered vividly and powerfully. On seeing his mother hurt, he describes it as "not very nice". The words conceal the deep hurt of that time.

Significantly, Scott again uses plain words to describe a time which seems to be the climax of his hurting.

"It involved the police towards me....(laughs quietly) So I was really silly".

"I've been in trouble for that...um....I have".

"I had to get arrested".

It is significant that there seems to be a contradiction in what Scott is saying and how he is saying it. The use of simple language can conceal deep feelings of hurt and shame. It seems his feelings of silliness conceal a deeper feeling of hurt and pain which results in a revelatory experience, demanding him to respond to those feelings in a completely different way.

"I decided I'm going to change now".

This statement ushers in what I am going to call Scott's healing voice. A change takes place which he displays as the beginning of healing, and the dissipation of hurting. I feel I need to stress that Scott's healing voice was a constant presence throughout our time together. I felt it's warmth, in Scott's laughter in particular, and I felt it's freshness.

"I've been getting really well....and I think I cope just by staking in there basically....it's getting better.....but lately, my attitude has been changing ....been growing a lot stronger since then, and try to communicate with

people”.

I have used his words from different parts of our conversation, because they demonstrate a growing sense of optimism which comes from healing, and the adverse effects of the abuse have begun to dissolve and become less powerful. Scott expresses this healing process.

“and lately I’ve been getting really well”.

These words have caught my eye, because it is an unusual, unexpected turn of phrase. I might have expected him to say that he had been getting ON really well, but the words he uses point to a change in his health. When we speak of ‘getting well’ there is an unspoken assumption that all was not well before. Scott voices his belief that he is on the road to recovery, that healing has begun and is continuing.

His awareness of the healing process has led him to consider the reasons for the changes that he feels inside himself. His knowing voice comes into play as he expresses his ideas around what has made a difference to him.

“....use my experiences and ....basically knowledge and everything to help people”.

Scott saw the support which was given as providing him with knowledge which he wanted to use to express his own desire to help other people. He recognised the power that this knowledge and understanding gave him.

“I’ve helped out quite a lot of friends. I persuaded my friend from stopping to self harm their self....we’ve done a group....I was helping out with some of the people as well....I was doing pretty well”.

Scott stated that all this came about because he was able to absorb the support that was given to him, particularly by a teacher who had known him for four years. The absorption meant that he could identify what she was doing for him. He was able to emulate her skills as she supported him.

"I was actually doing her job and stuff. So it felt really good".

It seems clear that the knowledge that he had gained during this period of support had provided the power for him to have an exhilarating experience. This led to other experiences which grew out of the confidence he had gained when he had used his understanding and knowledge to support and assist his friends.

"I think it's my attitude, it's made a difference and also how I think and feel".

Finally, the hurting, healing and knowing voices of Scott have so much to say about each other. There is no clear demarcation between them. The last words quoted demonstrate the complexity of personal stories, and how knowing and feeling are enmeshed, intertwined and tantalisingly difficult to pin down.

### **Coral – 14 year old girl**

Coral played a crucial part in her family's life. It was clear that her opinion was in the end a significant factor which made a huge difference to the way her mother saw their situation. Coral describes how her family had stayed together because her mother felt that staying together was the best option for the children. Despite things getting so bad that her mother had left the father taking the children more than once, and had gone into a

refuge at least once but then had returned, Coral considered her role in the final decision to leave and not go back as being central to her mother's decision. There is a strong feeling that Coral's opinion was so important to her mother, that her voicing of her belief that her mother should leave for good was a turning point in the family. This resulted in action which was never gone back on.

It is a very strong element which is reflected throughout Coral's story. Her relationship with her mother possessed a closeness which appears to go beyond the boundaries of a mother/daughter relationship. Coral's independence of people outside her mother and brothers is a strong element, and there seems to be a lack of need or a profession to the effect that no one else should be involved in her life while the family was going through very difficult experiences. Coral had tried to support her younger brothers and her mother, but had recognised that her involvement in the domestic violence had made things worse for her mother. Again this was a deciding factor in what she had decided to do.

The details of her life are not dwelled upon, except in one or two exceptional instances. Generally, Coral responds to her experiences in ways which demonstrate her maturity in emotional and psychological terms. She reflects upon her witnessing the domestic violence in calm and matter of fact ways without dwelling on any particular experiences; this appears to highlight her acceptance and acknowledgment of negative experiences in the light of her concern for her mother. Her own wishes appear to come about through the strength she has accumulated as she responded in vigilant and caring ways to her younger

brothers and to her mother. She is able to state and act upon what she thinks is right, and accepts the consequences of her actions without complaint or regret. She is satisfied with her life with her family as it has become, and although there is no reference to her step father, it is clear from her expressions of acceptance, that she is apparently content with what has come about.

Coral talked very quietly, and there were times when I had difficulty understanding what she said. From the very beginning, there was a gap between us which was all about understanding where each of us was coming from. I did feel that this gap gradually closed in the course of the interview, as I became more tuned into Coral's way of expressing herself, and Coral seemed to understand where I was coming from. Her replies were always to the point and clearly expressed. She did not move away from the theme of each question and I warmed towards her increasingly during the time we had together. She was entirely frank with me, and I found that it felt easy to empathise with her and could visualise her experiences. Coral responded to me naturally, and this played a part in how I reacted to her. I noticed how she was unpretentious, and appeared to me to be natural and quite child like in the way she displayed an openness towards me, which led to me responding in a spontaneous way.

I liked Coral a lot, and was impressed by her understanding of the adults in her life, particularly her mother and father. I was also struck by her independent spirit which did not prevent her from forming an understanding of the part she was to play in the

strengthening and evolution of her family. She clearly did not withdraw from her family in emotional terms, despite the need to find ways to escape from the hurt which she felt.

### **CASE STUDY of Coral**

The themes I have chosen of single voice and multiple voices continue to be at the forefront of my thinking. Coral's voice is not easy to categorise, as there are many intricate nuances which cover a spectrum of insights and images which do not easily lend themselves to broad concepts. However, I have chosen to highlight Coral's knowing voice as this I believe is at the centre of her personal power, and it explains much of her story.

The clearest example of the knowledge which Coral shared was her disclosure that she had told her mother to leave.

"I was the one who told my mum that we had to get away and tried to make her do it".

She was willing to act upon what she knew, and presented to her mother the knowledge that she possessed, with the added action of 'making' her mother behave in such a way as to support her daughter's knowledge. Coral exhibits enormous confidence in the knowledge she has acquired. This confidence is made manifest by her making her mother act in accord with what she knew to be right. Coral displays this kind of confidence in her recognising the concerns of her best friend. Despite the relative shortness of their friendship, she states,

"I can talk to her about nearly everything...I say to her all the time that if she needs to talk she can..."

The dual concepts of 'talking' and 'everything' remain central and connected in Coral's thinking. One has a kind of dependence on the other and she embraces the idea that they are intimately intertwined and should be so.

"Now that it's all out and I've told everything, I feel that it's always going to be there but I can kind of move on....."

Earlier she had believed that talking to just her mum was all she needed to do, but she recognised her mother's observation that this was not sufficient.

"...she thinks that I didn't talk to her about everything".

In consequence, a support worker had been working with her and her brother while they were in the refuge, and Coral accepted this development and recognised the significance of talking to him about things which were too sensitive for her mother.

"I was scared I would make her upset..."

The consequences of knowledge, of personal convictions and feelings are clearly visible in Coral's view of her situation.

"I was scared it might make her want to take him back again".

She is fully aware that her knowledge provides the means to destroy what she sees as an improving situation, and freely states that these consequences were at the forefront of her thinking. She would do nothing to jeopardise the overall deeply held conviction that her mother, herself and her brothers would all be better off away from the father. With the recognition that once everything had been acknowledged and brought out into the open



through talking about it, she knew that she could move on, and has been able to see that her relationship with her father will probably never change.

"He changed for like two days and then he was back to his normal self.

So I just knew it was all an act. He wasn't going to change".

"He was there to help and ....he wasn't like my dad....I know there's other people out there that can help and that they're not just there to ruin our life....".

"I would .... just listen to Eminem...and I would just wish that dad would be just like that with me....but obviously he wasn't".

"I love my dad but I just knew that it was the right thing (to leave)".

Acknowledging the rightness of a course despite strong feelings which would have the power to deviate her from that course, she voiced her belief that there was always the possibility of being persuaded not to follow the right course.

"She'd left before and gone back to him. I knew this had to be the last time".

In her eyes, it was her mother's last chance to leave, and there could be no going back.

Coral retrospectively was able to imagine the circumstances which precluded the possibility of going back. There was, for her, no other way. She knew with a certainty born of her experiences which had left an indelible mark; through these experiences, she had created a picture of her life, a family image without her father. This image had become a reality in that she had severed contact with her father after "a huge argument, a lot of crying and screaming in the middle of the street".

The public nature of this severance strengthened her perception of what she had imagined. She had created a better life without her father, and she states this simply.

"I feel that...we might not have as much stuff as what everyone else does...but I'm happy like with what we do have....cos we started with nothing".

Her picture, her image of what she had hoped for had not depended upon 'stuff', but she wanted above everything to know that her mother was alright.

"...I hated seeing her and hearing it (Domestic violence)".

Her image of 'getting away' was based on the eradication of painful, sensory and emotional experiences; this done, Coral has found happiness because the hatred, which had accompanied her previous life, had now become a distant memory.

Interestingly, Coral's knowing voice is very much centred on her relationship with her mother. The most powerful emotion expressed was in relation to her mother. There is only one repetition throughout the interview which is about her and her mother.

"We have a very good relationship"...

"We have a really good relationship".

The significance of the relationship cannot be over estimated. A lot of knowledge is accrued around her mother, and is dependent upon Coral's vision of their relationship which has as a component an intriguing sharing of power, which shifts and fluctuates according to circumstances.

"I wanted to help her..."

"I know it was hard for her".

"My mum was trying to be like a mum and dad for me..."

"I stopped joining in with her...just left her".

These statements indicate changes in the exercising of power within their relationship. There is a poignancy to 'just left her', which strikes at the heart of what Coral is trying to express. Her decision to intercede and then to withdraw contains a degree of matter of factness which may conceal feelings of powerlessness which emanate from situations where the only way empowerment can occur is through acting and then retreating. The vision of this young girl having to leave her mother to face her attacker alone arouses our compassion. Her words echo this miserable situation.

"She would always reassure me.....but I did still feel guilty".

The power sharing between mother and daughter ebbs and flows. Coral's confidence has seemingly developed from her recognition of forces over which she has some control, and this has made her into a powerful partner, in some instances holding precedence over her mother. She knows she has a controlling influence, which has probably accumulated because of the strains and stresses of living with abuse. It would seem likely that in the absence of a supportive husband, the mother would turn more and more to a daughter who is supportive and helpful. They would clear up the house together, Coral would stay with the boys when things were kicking off, and it was clear that Coral sided with her mother in her actions, support and words.

The relationship tends to sound like a friendship with some unspoken boundaries which were all about personal safety. However, the reassuring voice is definitely a mother's voice, her mother's voice, one which wishes to nurture, protect and encourage her. The

mother in Coral's eyes is 'good', and there is a feeling that this is compounded by the mother firstly taking the blame for Coral's wayward actions, and secondly, the recognition that the domestic violence was not either's fault. All these elements compounded the ties between mother and daughter, which hold, despite the tremendous shifting of their lives and the resultant pressure brought about by these shifts and changes.

In conclusion, Coral's knowing voice confidently strikes out at what is unacceptable. There is no room for hesitancy, and very little time for sympathy. The correctness of her evaluation of their circumstances has been proved she knows, by the outcome of their actions based upon her evaluation. This has resulted in a voice which is both self assured and courageous. It is quietly so, however, because Coral does not see her present life in terms of her own success. More than that, she is sensitive to the positions held by others and expresses this in relation to her friend.

"... but I think she's worried".

This awareness has developed through the recognition of the value of her own experiences and those of other people, and a significant sensitivity which is present within her relationships.

### **Terry – 13 year old boy**

Terry has a troubled story which centres on his witnessing of his mother's suffering caused by appalling domestic violence. His story is not sequential, in that there seems to be a lack of continuity as far as events are concerned, but the images he creates, for

example, of him trying to push his father off his mother, his description of the domestic violence perpetrated against his sister's boyfriend and his father's behaviour in various settings are all vividly explained and described, creating powerful impressions. Terry has remained close to his mother throughout the changes that have taken place. His loyalty is to her and to his family who are sympathetic to her and to her experiences. He is absolutely clear in his mind about what it was that brought about the violence against his mother and himself, and has no doubt that in some measure the controlling purpose of the violence has continued beyond his parents' separation.

His emotional state is underpinned by a strong sense of injustice, which he sees as permeating and dominating the experiences of his family since the break up. Despite the improvement in his mother's health which he has observed, in that the awful physical and mental abuse has ceased and she is no longer crying continuously, and is no longer suffering physical harm, he is aware that there are forces beyond her control which oppose her, and which anger and bewilder him. A very important aspect for him is that a degree of sympathy is shown to his father which he sees as undeserving. He cannot conceal his contempt for those who make judgements which he sees as unfair and unsupported by the reality of their lives.

The relationships which he prizes are based upon the recognition of his feelings, and which demonstrate a strong empathic understanding of his position. His sister's boyfriend, his sister and his mother are all embraced by Terry's view that there has to be support present to enable the relationships to flourish. This support can override all kinds

of other issues which might have prejudiced the relationship, for example the fact that his sister's boyfriend was black. This was an issue for Terry, which he acknowledged, but which was dismissed because of the emotional support which his sister's boyfriend gave him.

Terry is troubled by the lack of understanding demonstrated beyond his intimate circle, and this is probably the reason for his remaining very much at home. This decision has brought him to recognise the importance of learning how to cope with his strong emotional feelings and the difficulties around his brother's behaviour at home. He is aware that he can control his feelings through avoidance and through withdrawal. He also has learnt that self expression through physical activities such as wrestling and boxing have been beneficial.

Despite being troubled by the unfairness of the world, he has created a life at home which is centred on coping with forces which enter his home over which he feels he has some control. His independent action has moved on from a desire to physically protect his mother which was the result of a strong attachment to her and a profound fear of what was going to happen to her, to a desire to protect her from the unfairness of a wider society, which he recognises and believes to be true as he observes his mother suffering from unjust treatment. This wider society includes solicitors, neighbours, a brother and church members, who all receive some form of condemnation. His lack of trust finds expression in his staying at home and his keeping his friends in the setting of school. His disdain for those who discredit his family is whole hearted.

His emotional bond with his father is broken by his refusal to call him dad any longer. His divorce from his father is something he wants deeply, and is reflected in several mentions of the legal divorce between his mother and father. His severance can only be emotional because contact arrangements are regularly kept; however, this emotional disassociation is crucial to Terry, because it echoes his loyalty to his mother and to the family which supports her. Despite having to spend time with his father, which he says is ok, he is able to hold on to the knowledge that there can be no emotional bonding or closeness because of his father's abusive behaviour. This indicates that Terry has found a degree of autonomy which has developed through his understanding of the controlling core of domestic abuse and violence.

It was clear from the very beginning of my time with Terry, that he exhibited a very strong emotional state in relation to his experiences of domestic violence. This did perturb me a little as I wondered how I was going to handle my responses to his emotive statements. I wondered too if I was going to be able to structure the conversation, or whether it was better to let Terry talk without there being too much in the way of direction from me. This was crossing my mind as I listened to Terry, and it remained with me for most of the interview.

There was, however, a strong feeling in me which maintained the need for me to remain very calm, as I felt that Terry was very close to some terrible experiences and that he was still working on acknowledging them, and making sense of them, and he still had quite a way to go. I found that the calmness resulted in me reflecting back what he said, in a

matter of fact way, without making many references to the awfulness of the situation that he was in. I felt this was more appropriate to his needs, and I believe that he did feel that I understood, because after I had reflected back, he would often add a little more to what he had said. The interview was carried out in this way, with me remaining almost cold, while he talked in quite an agitated way.

His intellectual thought processes were very quick, sometimes too quick for their vocalisation. This resulted in his story telling jumping, repeating, going back on itself, contradicting occasionally and generally becoming rather disjointed. However, he always seemed to be able to get across what he wanted to communicate, because his words always seemed to form themselves into coherent phrases, which encapsulated the essence of what he was trying to say. I also felt that the sometimes confused vocalisation of his thoughts was not only due to his emotional state, but was also indicative of the sense making processes which were very much part of what he was trying to achieve. I knew that a very strong element of talking about what has happened to us, is the making sense of what has happened.

Through Terry's courageous effort at understanding and making meaning out of his life by talking about it, he was clarifying all kinds of dilemmas, inconsistencies and difficulties. I found his tenacity through these struggles quite remarkable, and felt warmed by his positive response to my asking at the end of the interview if there was anything else he wanted to tell me. It was at this time that he revealed to me in totality what he really felt about his father. It was a remarkable moment and confirmed my



feeling that the interview had been a valuable opportunity for Terry to reflect and develop his understanding of his experiences and relationships.

### **CASE STUDY of Terry**

Terry revealed himself to be highly energised and clear in relation to his thinking. There seemed very little room for doubt in his expressions, and this is why I began by choosing to analyse and interpret what I felt as being his vociferous voice; however, I think that there are connotations to vociferous which are not entirely positive, and although his voice is distinctive, there remains a sensitivity and emotionality which vociferous does not describe. Much of what Terry describes contains a 'troubled' dimension in that there is a clear questioning of moral positions in relation to what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour towards others.

"They talk to me, I just don't to them cos I really get annoyed. I don't see the point".

His observation that other people have the capacity to annoy him, and that there is no point in developing relationships with these people, reflects his position that his feelings should be a strong indicator of where he stands. It is interesting that the 'point' has probably been defined in some way, in order for Terry to have rejected it. He had to know about the point in the first place, if he was to consciously disregard it.

"...he tries to start a fight...I just push him over. I don't see the point of hitting him...".

His brother does not appear to create such an emotive response from him, and he is able to respond in what he sees as an acceptable way, using various means to avoid the possibility of his feelings becoming his master. His moral position seems to echo the degree of emotional commitment to the person involved.

"He (dad) pretended he didn't know her (his daughter) but thought it was a joke but it wasn't funny...if I told her she really wouldn't like it, and she would cry and I don't want to see her cry..."

His decision to keep secret something which he saw as harming the happiness of someone he loved is a powerful testimony of his desire to add to their emotional well being. An acceptable moral position, he believes, is dependant upon the emotional investment made. Where the attachment is slight, there is 'no point' to trying to overcome negative emotions, and build something stronger. Similarly, where the emotional investment is great, there is every point to doing everything you can to build that relationship into something even stronger.

This moral position is reflected in his attitudes to various people outside the close confines of his immediate family. In ethical terms, he sees many people as being untrustworthy, who are mainly motivated by selfishness, greed, dishonesty or unkindness.

"Even though he (dad) lies all the time".

"He (older brother) left us to deal with it (domestic violence)".

"My dad didn't have any money no more, so he (older brother) didn't need him anymore".

"I was naughty one lesson and he (teacher) just hated me since then".

"He'll (dad) start crying but then everyone will be on his side...it gets on my nerves...".

"I don't like solicitors anymore. They're just in it for the money".

There is a strong degree of outrage which Terry exhibits both in his responses to these people, and in the expressions of indignation which he voices privately. His attitudes to those whom he sees as untrustworthy are strongly held, but not entirely rigid and set in stone.

"I never used to have respect for coloured people....I used to be scared...they (the news) always say it's always the black people but it's not".

A seemingly trustworthy source, the news, as experienced by Terry, has been overturned by an intimate knowledge which has completely changed Terry's view. His relationship with his sister's boyfriend, seemingly founded on his love for his sister, has become an immensely important part of Terry's life.

"My sister calls every day...I love my sister, she's great and her boyfriend.

He's cool".

Linking associations by affection or disassociations by distrust is brought about by the fear of dreadful consequences of having people close to you who will stop at nothing to gain control.

"My mum was being sick...every time she went to the toilet...crying nearly every second of the day....I don't want to see her like that again....she'll be safe cos I know that I can defend her....I used to push him away and everything...but if I didn't do it and my mum would get really hurt and she was crying on the

floor...she was really hurt...I used to cry cos I thought I could have stopped that but I didn't..."

The anguish of Terry is clearly felt, and provides a fuller understanding of why he has taken his particular moral ground which does not allow another person the possibility of closeness to him, with an associated respect, unless they have been introduced by a trusted family member, as in the case of his sister's boyfriend, or have proved themselves to be emotionally supportive, as in the case of the domestic violence support worker. The emotional element of any kind of relationship is the determining factor for Terry.

The isolation created by domestic violence is something which Terry describes in stark detail.

"My mum never went to town. She was always at home...the only place that she went which was not home was Tesco's or my nan's..."

"I don't go out anymore...I haven't got many friends in that area...I'm just scared for my mum."

The bleakness of his life and his mother's still influences every part of his life. Despite his mum being "a lot better now", he finds he has to respond to a deeply embedded desire to protect her, even though he knows he is a 'teenager' and should have his own life. The dangers of "another man" are keenly felt and provide the reason for his isolation, as he stays home because he knows that he can "defend her". It is for this reason, as I have begun this preliminary analysis, I have baulked at labelling Terry's voice. There doesn't seem to be a single word that I can use to describe the emotive power of his voice. It is

indignant, loving, fearful and brave....a voice that remains with the listener long after the words have been spoken.

### **Karl – 12 year old boy**

Karl's story contains a prevailing sense of loss which touches every part of his life.

There is a strong desire for him to find ways of overcoming the losses of his life and he talks about them openly. Having been fearful of his father finding out where they live, he has accepted that there is a real danger of this happening through his father's friends or his brother. He is also fully aware that he had revealed too much to his father during a phone call, and that the repercussions of this were very difficult and caused considerable anxiety. His worries around his father were dealt with by his attempting to put his father completely out of his mind. This was reinforced by a new step father, who had taken an important part in making it easier for the absent father to be forgotten. With a new father figure who provides the family with treats and fun experiences, the loss of his father is softened.

Karl had a deep affection for his dog, and talked in detail about him, and how the dog came to be given away. The sense of injustice is strong, and reveals how Karl views his father's part in adverse and painful experiences. The list of losses is long, but Karl does not directly blame his father for the loss of his home and garden. However, an impression is drawn and actually expressed of a callous father who does not care about Karl.

The disruption to Karl's life seems all the more unfair and unreasonable when considered against the back drop of Karl not having heard or seen any domestic violence. There are issues around the truth of this which will be discussed later on; at this time, his denial of actually witnessing domestic violence is accepted, as his belief that his father's lack of involvement and idleness around the family was the main reason for the break up.

Arguments between his mother and father are only very briefly mentioned in the form of an after thought which almost disappears at the end of his description of life at home with his dad. The fear he feels in relation to his dad seems to have developed through his being aware of his mother's fear, and this indicates a closeness which he does not really express explicitly. He did not really notice a change in his mother after they left except that she was taking more care over her appearance. He talks little about his relationship with his mother, which seem to reflect an increasing lack of concern about her, and a relaxing of the anxiety which had prevailed before going into the refuge. He appears to be content with his life as it has become and talks with pride and confidence that he will have attended four different schools since leaving the family home.

Karl comes across as a sociable person, who seeks out company as a way of dealing with anxiety. He talks about various people in numbers, two or three, as being friends of his mother, and describes his joining in with games and activities with the other children in the refuge. His friend from the refuge, who has remained a friend since his leaving, has a special place, as he has been able to stay at his home and he clearly enjoyed his time with him. His relationships within the family are more problematic particularly his dealings

with his older sister. It seems that there has been some tension around their relationship which he sees as having developed during the time when his father was being difficult. When they lived with their father, he could not get on with his sister, and he was quite vague about the reason for this. The problems around the relationship had been carried through to their new life and there is a feeling that this has been completely accepted by Karl as being something that will probably not change. His concerns are more focussed on his younger brother. He is worried about him in that he feels their father would win him over with his gift buying tactics and then be able to control him so that he would inadvertently divulge where the family was living. This desire to keep their whereabouts secret is a crucial element in Karl's story, and much of his thinking and feelings are a direct result of this desire.

I need to begin by saying that initially, I did not feel any strong connections, empathy or attraction to Karl. This may have been due in some part to the emotional drain brought about by the interview with the previous young person, who had both challenged and energised me. To begin another interview required me to overcome some of my own resistance to beginning again with someone new, when I felt that I wanted to linger with the feelings that the previous interview had engendered. Nevertheless, I did begin to feel some warmth towards Karl, specifically around the losses he had experienced. Although I found him to be very 'cool' and generally reluctant to confide in me, I still felt that he was doing the best that he could, and I appreciated there was a little bit of him that he was willing to share with me.

I still feel some confusion about this, because on an intellectual level, there seemed to be something saying to me that Karl had not thought about his experiences very much and this was confirmed when he described how he chose to ignore things and people, specifically his father, when there were unpleasant associations. By putting things out of his mind and refusing to give any thought to them, he was ensuring that he could bear anything that he could not understand or which aroused difficult emotions. He did not seek answers or explanations. He did not seem to want to understand the situations he found himself in at this stage. I see now that this was a coping strategy for him, but proved to be something of a barrier between us, because he only wanted to provide simple answers, which did not seem to reflect any complexity of thinking and feeling, and which pointed to an unwillingness to reflect upon his experiences.

I did feel a little frustrated and worried by our conversation but realised that there were some very obvious constraints; he was saying what he could manage in an artificial situation with someone he did not know at all. He admitted to shyness with strangers in the past, and I wondered if that was a very strong factor which influenced what was happening with me. The intellectual connection was threatened by a lack of comprehension on both sides, but I responded by using much simpler language to Karl. I wondered why that had happened as it was unconsciously done, but think that it was brought on by a subconscious desire to mirror his talk in order to encourage a feeling of safety and security. I probably felt that his understanding would be easier, and would therefore put him more at his ease. I think that there was a need to close the intellectual gap, without in any way appearing to be patronising.



In this way, the intellectual and emotional links to Karl seemed to be artificially drawn, and did not happen naturally. However, I did feel an emotional warmth for Karl which was a product of my concluding that he possessed a kind of emptiness, that something of himself had been lost and that he would need a special amount of consideration, compassion and encouragement, if he was to entirely overcome the adverse effects of the domestic violence. This emptiness is reflected in his preoccupation with the loss of his possessions, his dog, his home, his close relationship with his sister and his father.

Many other losses have occurred in Karl's life, his friends, his school and familiar places. His life has changed beyond all recognition. His present life requires that he ignore much of what has gone before because his past is so threatening. His life has become a blank and deserted canvas which at the moment Karl cannot explain. Karl is unable to describe his life in any detail because he has erased it, or it has been erased for him.

### **CASE STUDY of Karl**

Karl's voice is characterised by the feeling that he is going through a transitional phase which has a lot to do with the almost complete lack of continuity and common factors between his past life and the present. It appears that the only cohesive factor has been his mother. Everything else had changed or been lost. Karl is very selective about what he remembers from the past. Some things are described quite readily because they occurred "ages before we left". Other experiences, more recent and more intense, are "just ignored".

The emptiness of Karl's life is expressed in various ways. His sense of loss is often described in covert terms. He does not wish to admit that the garden and his bike have gone, and that if his father had made a positive contribution to the family, they might still be together.

"We had a really nice garden....".

"...he said my bike rusted away in the garage...".

(Mum decided to leave) "because he (dad) never did anything".

Each statement conceals a longing for things to have been different, his wish for his garden and his bike, and his wish for his father to have behaved differently. He seems to express this longing in a way which is not seeking for sympathy. The hurt contained in these statements is not allowed to surface. The statements appear to be devoid of underlying emotion, and are simple observations of what has happened. There is some evidence of grief, however, contained in his story which is centred around his dogs.

"...we had a dog when I was born which ran away and then I had my own dog...I had my own which was a Labrador and I called it --, and it could jump a seven foot fence ....we gave it to the police....we never got its injections because he (dad) wouldn't let us....I was like really annoyed and that....I didn't like it when my other dog ran away".

The anger which Karl felt was compounded by his father's part in the loss of his 'own' dog, which echoed his feelings at the loss of the other dog. His association between the two experiences demonstrates his fondness towards both dogs, and the emptiness which ensued when they were both lost to him. His loss was compounded, and the first reaction

to grief, that of anger, was the result. His anger is expressed in relation to his father not returning his possessions when he had made an arrangement to do so. Karl's grieving is almost hidden by his 'coolness' and calmness. His tone is one of indifference, but I interpret this as a stance which Karl assumes because it helps him cope with his feelings.

"...he said he was going to give it all (our stuff) to my auntie ....when my auntie went to meet him to get the stuff ...um...he didn't have any...he wasn't even there".

Karl gives little away except annoyance at what his father had done. The disappointment he must have felt must have been acute.

Karl is confused and bewildered by his new home. He is displaced in an emotional sense as well as in a physical sense.

"I didn't really know because I'd never heard anything about it. I never even knew it existed".

There is a strong feeling that he has accepted this condition because of the overriding fear of his father finding out their whereabouts. Their safety requires some form of sacrifice, and Karl is more than ready to accept this. Despite his confusion, the displacement has been accepted and tolerated by him.

In conclusion, the transition of Karl is evident in his quiet acceptance of his mother's new boyfriend or as he corrects himself, husband. A characteristic of accepting a new life can be acquiescence; there is no sign of rebellion or a feeling of disquiet with the way his

new life is going. There is a feeling that Karl is satisfied for the present. His only fear is centred on his father, who has proved untrustworthy and volatile.

“..I know how to control my anger, not be like, well, my dad was like”.

As Karl experiences this crucial transition, he has evolved a tactic which has involved forgetting his father as much as he could and disassociating himself from his previous life. His voice is strangely unemotional, as he describes the evolution of his new life.

His search for peace and an untroubled life has led him to a place which feels acceptable.

“I think like it's (family) improved a lot”.

Karl's voice has been affected by the domestic violence, but he is gaining strength and confidence as he finds some emotional and physical security in his new life.

### **Rose – 15 year old girl**

Rose tells her story chronologically, with events of devastating impact swiftly following one after another. It is evident that she has experienced many traumatic changes in her life particularly in relation to her home, and the almost nomadic existence that she describes is sequentially made sense of through her ability to remember and describe an uninterrupted flow of events. She demonstrates a masterful chronological memory for times, places and events. Her evident grasp of the consequences which proceeded out of the behaviour of the close adults in her life, namely her mum and her step dad, shows a clear understanding of the reasons for the appalling situation she found herself in. Her enormous pain is described without hesitation. Her guilt around her unkind treatment of her younger sister is stated without reservation.

Her story contains a free expression of emotions of every kind, including a remarkable sensitivity to the plight of others. Alcohol is described by Rose as being a dreadful component in her life. The whole family had been adversely affected by it to such a degree that it threatened to divide her from her mum, and it seems that alcohol abuse almost succeeded in separating them permanently. This division Rose sees as being both physical and emotional. Alcohol abuse had had a devastatingly negative effect on the behaviour and well being of all the family members. The domestic violence was seen by Rose as also contributing to her severance from her mum, causing a breakdown of affection and attachment.

She viewed the consequences as being attributable to the combination of domestic violence and alcohol abuse which led firstly to the disintegration and ultimately to the erosion of her mum's ability to mother her and care for her.

The horrors of her life continued even after the break up of her mum's marriage to her step-dad. He continued to try and exert control by stalking the family, and it was necessary to start a new life leaving all their possessions behind except for a couple of suitcases. It was essential to leave no trail that could be followed. Their only chance as a family lay in total secrecy in relation to their new whereabouts. This did occur but Rose's troubles did not end as her mum suffered from loneliness and depression once their new life had begun. Rose, who clearly loves her mum, noted that her mum continued to be very unhappy, and that life was grim. Events did take a fortunate turn, however, when her mum decided to get help for herself and for Rose and her sister, as

she began to recognise the damage which had been caused to her daughters by their harmful experiences caused by alcohol abuse and domestic violence.

The support worker who became involved at this stage played a crucial part in rehabilitating the family, specifically working with Rose and her mum individually, strengthening each of them, and assisting them in overcoming the negative effects of the past; these included addiction to alcohol, depression, self harming, guilt, low self esteem, loss of attachment and dysfunctional relationships, and which specifically focussed on the causes and aftermath of domestic violence. Rose describes her problems with relationships, with schooling and her emotional instability, but recognises that things are now different. She acknowledges her new formed friendships and her increasing confidence and growing independence.

A sensitivity to the needs of her mum remains however, despite the damage caused by her apparent rejection of Rose during the most injurious times. Rose's reproof of her mum is not overtly expressed, and she remains loyal to her mum as she begins to build her own life.

My interview with Rose was my last of five, and could have faltered because of my possible emotional saturation. I had listened to the most shocking accounts of child abuse for an hour and a half; each was individual and each described unreservedly the consequential trauma associated with all forms of domestic violence and abuse. As the

protracted abusive experiences of the young people unfolded, I had become increasingly drawn into living the vivid accounts of their suffering.

As I listened to Rose, I wanted to just let her talk. I never once opened my mouth to interrupt, or voice my thoughts. I have since wondered if Rose would have allowed the stream of her thoughts to run so freely if I had interviewed her first rather than last on this particular day. It is possible that my 'tired' demeanour had unconsciously influenced her, and that it had had a pronounced effect on the way she expressed herself. However, it is clear that she talked in a remarkable way, hardly pausing at all, and allowing her life to be unfolded to my view without any hesitation. It was the longevity of her initial response which seemed to me to be so extraordinary and which opened up so many possibilities for further questions. As her response lengthened, I found myself wondering at her ability to recall so much detail, and inwardly speculating as to when she would have no more to say. This indicates how I had relaxed with her, and had simply allowed myself to go with her flow.

I was indeed very calm with Rose, perhaps overly so, as I have since regretted a line of questioning which indicates to me now a loss of guarded awareness. It is crucial to conduct such an interview with circumspection and sensitivity. However, during the interview I did not sense that I was probing an issue which, in retrospect I should perhaps have left alone. However, I chose to ask Rose about experiences which were filled with the most negative emotions. However, Rose withstood my line of questioning with remarkable self control and calmness. This demonstrated her strength, and also her

determination to face the worst aspects of her life without equivocation. Her kindness to me in accepting my tough probing into why she had not spoken to her mum about her suicidal tendencies, demonstrates her willingness to be open and non judgemental.

My respect for Rose was founded on her readiness to see it all through with me, including talking about the really awful times and her courage, which she emanates throughout her story. I realise now that this line of questioning was derived from my own intimate 'knowing', and a personal recognition and identification with aspects of her story. A concomitance existed between our stories. There was a resonance which drew me in rather like, as I see now, a moth attracted by the flickering flame of a candle. I could not help myself apparently, as I too had had suicidal tendencies, and had known suicide in my family just as she had. I felt very grateful to Rose for her tolerance and her belief in me. Her total acceptance of my line of questioning revealed an exceptional trust and faith which left me feeling humbled..

### **CASE STUDY of Rose**

Rose's story describes with intensity the close and intimate relationships which surround her, but remains silent for the most part in relation to a broader context, that of the community which she inhabits. Her voice is for the most part concerned with and fixed upon personal issues and lingers on private and intensely sensitive concerns. Her public voice has a comparatively brief focus on school, social care professionals and the Council with no other reference to the wider community.

“..we was put into B and B by the Council ... the Council said to us we have just



to up and go and we had to leave everything behind.....”

Rose expresses concerns about the power wielded by public authority to make decisions which have dreadful repercussions, and which seemingly are made with little empathic thought for those involved. The loss of all their possessions except for a few clothes indicates an apparent callous disregard on the part of the authorities for the consequences of their actions, which resulted in a victim of harassment and stalking by a previous violent partner being victimised further. There is so much of Rose's story that indicates an almost total lack of emotional, financial and advisory support which should be expected as the fundamental right of all victims of domestic violence.

It is for this reason that her voice exemplifies what it means to be a survivor. The essence of her story is that despite things going from bad to worse, and despite the inability of anyone to recognise that Rose's family was suffering from an appalling series of crises, which required a package of supportive interventions to help them, the family survived. It is true that a support worker did appear on the scene, but only at the mother's invitation when it seems that their lives could not have got much worse.

“mum was so depressed ....she just wanted to drink all the time....I was going through a stage of self harming....”

It seems that not at any point did a statutory or voluntary agency provide support or advice. Rose and her mum and sister had had to fend for themselves. There is a sense that the pressures made upon the family as a whole to be self reliant and not in any way dependent upon outside services, had in some measure caused each member of the family to find her own solutions.

"I got bullied at school .... So I went to live with my nan....I had to come back ..and finish school here".

"I tried to do everything I could so that my mum wouldn't get beaten up".

"I did speak to one of my friends..."

Challenges were apparently met individually and solutions carved out without any explanation as to how the decisions were reached within the family. This individualistic way of dealing with hardship and crisis is mirrored by Rose's definition of what it was that changed her life into one that had a share of happiness.

"I was allowed to be me for once. .... I don't care what anyone else thinks as long as I'm happy and as long as my mum's happy.....I'm going to be there to support her (mum) but as the child at the same time ...."

Rose is absolutely clear in how she sees herself, and how her identity has a bearing on her responsibilities. Being 'me' has an integrity which seems to have grown from the imposition of having to survive alone and unsupported. The damage she felt she needed to inflict upon herself was cursory.

"...slitting my wrists and things like that.....it wasn't properly done or nothing. It was just to get attention, back then..."

To be a survivor, there is, in one sense of its definition, the possibility that others have died. A widow survives her husband. An orphan survives her parents. Rose remains alive, whilst death of a kind had touched all those around her. Each tragic character exhibits a withdrawal, a loss or a rejection of human relationships. Rose's mum turns to alcohol for solace. Rose tries to erase the person nearest her, her sister.

"...when we were left alone, I tipped coke over her (my sister's) head ...you can't touch my things ....you go over there, just leave me alone".

It appeared that Rose, her mum and her sister were each treading their own single path, intent on their own survival. The paths overlapped at only one point apparently, when the support worker spent time with Rose and her mum, but there is a feeling that this did not occur simultaneously. The support of one had to be quite different from that with the other.

"..he said it was time for my mum to be the mum and me to be the teenager.."

Rose's path has remained separate from her sister. Her relationship seems to revolve around making amends for her earlier rejection of her.

"I'm trying to make up for it now .... cos like I try to be there for her now".

Later she admits that she goes out more and more with her friends.

"I feel it's ok for me to do my own thing now ... as soon as I'm old enough I can leave..."

The solitary path has broadened but at the time of telling her story, Rose was not allowing those who had suffered with her to join her, as she exercised her new found growing confidence. Perhaps, the unaided existence of her previous life had in some measure contributed to her self sufficiency and had demanded a greater degree of self government; she had become abnormally unconnected from her family through circumstance. Now she has become disconnected through choice. Connections are formed through conjoining and adhesion. There seems to have been very little attempt at uniting the family by Rose's mum, and no apparent 'glue' applied by her to the

relationships. So, Rose had slipped away into a world of her own making, with just an occasional, brief pang of guilt over leaving her mum, which she easily dismisses.

"I've kind of pushed my mum out, which makes me feel really bad sometimes ... but then I ... feel like when my mum had all that time to have ... to have all the time with me but she never took it ... she pushed me out ... so I'm not trying to get back at her or nothing but I feel it's ok for me to do my own thing".

Accompanying the pang of guilt there is a reference to a moral code which allows Rose to do what she is doing. She is not getting back at her mum. Her life experiences have taught her that it's ok for her to take control of her life, even if it means 'pushing' her mum out.

Rose's 'survivor' voice prevails as one of optimism but also acceptance of the damaging impact of the past. There is a sense that she has remained distant from the source of her suffering, which has allowed her to embrace a positive demeanour in all her relationships. The self imposed distancing from those who possess painful associations has seemingly allowed Rose the breathing space to develop her own identity, without unduly hurting other people's feelings. She believes she is justified in what she is doing. She has to look out for herself now. This idea holds precedence over all others, as her life moves forward and expands in entirely new directions, with hardly a backward glance.

Her voice is confident and demonstrates the comfortable position which Rose has now established. The past does not hold any terrors now. Perhaps this is why she is able to talk about it with such ease, with such fluidity and eloquence.

## **Views of the voices: findings of emotionality**

### **Layer two – emotionality**

Once the preliminary layer of analysis had been completed using the voice relational method of analysis, the emotionality of the stories had become drawn in such a way as to expose an underlying complexity and creative potential which demanded further interpretative endeavour. The fascination of this deeper layer of analysis became the emerging emotionality which exhibited an intertwining and commonality within the stories which also powerfully contrasted and diversified.

The interpretive gaze becomes fixed upon the emotionality expressed within the stories and travels across the experiences of the young people finding commonalities, ambiguities and diversity within and between them. Emphasis is laid upon crossing from one story to another, to compare, contrast and configure patterns of emotionality.

### **Emotionality: locating the feeling voice**

The feelings expressed by the young people were varied, convergent and numerous. It became apparent that some were indicative of suffering, whilst others were pointing towards declarations founded on healing and recuperation. In this way, two broad themes had surfaced within the category of 'feeling', which provided the basis for the following analysis, those of the suffering voice and the healing voice.

### **Disempowering emotionality and abuse: locating the suffering voice**

Some individuals survive violence and suffering whilst others do not (Mananzan et al. 1996). However, "The pain permeates the being of all women" (Ackermann 1996), and it follows that the pain felt by children and young people also penetrates all who care about them. Here the aim is to honour those who have not survived (ibid.) and to hold in high esteem those who have only just begun the journey from debilitating emotions born of suffering to empowering, humanising emotions which indicate the arrival at a more desirable destination. The view here is that those whose struggles are far from over are no less worthy than those who have seemingly arrived and survived. It is also the view held that the journey spoken of has an intrinsic worth in every respect and that disempowering emotions possess a complexity and interrelatedness which may conceal their value as motivators and strengtheners. However, these emotions are generally accompanied by anguish.

With a deep sense of the reflective and ethical considerations which must be employed whilst analysing and interpreting such emotions felt by the young people which have tended to disempower them and exacerbate their suffering and accompanying pain, every effort has been made to sensitively examine these feelings. There is the recognition that all facets of emotionality should be valued, as an intrinsic part of human experience. To honour all the feelings of the young people in all their complexity is an overriding principle which is consistently adhered to throughout this analysis. As Boler encourages,

the aim here is to “recuperate’ emotions from their shunned status and reclaim them in new ways” (1999: xxiv).

The second layer of analysis began with a focus on the disempowering emotions of fearfulness, aggressiveness and bitterness.

### **Fearfulness**

“When it first started happening, when \_ started beating up my mum, it was more like I was really scared, scared mostly because like I was only little and just didn’t know why ...” (Rose: 42).

The rawness of Rose’s reaction as a ‘little’ child, the intensity of those feelings of being ‘scared, scared’ indicate a powerful mixture of incomprehension and shock. As young as she was, she was now able to isolate her initial reaction to abuse, with the knowledge that her feelings would change and adjust, and she would respond differently as she grew more mature. The narrowness and intensity of her early response Rachman argues is due to the power and force of the threat and there may be “enhanced perceptual sensitivity and even distortion” (1998: 27). As the abuse continued, Rose’s feelings became more complex as she recognised a pervading fearful guilt which was the result of imposed blame. Her step father convicted Rose of being responsible for the abuse, and so she accepted the blame and the punishment.

“I tried to do everything I could so that my mum wouldn’t get beaten up ... so it was like a case of doing the right thing at that point” (Rose: 42).

Acknowledging the blame required that Rose took responsibility for her fearfulness. The perpetrator is distanced and becomes a remote almost unidentifiable entity. Fear is seen

as self inflicted and because fear requires an attempt to avoid or escape the threat (Rachman 1998), Rose has to do 'the right thing' and take total responsibility. It is her only means of escape.

### **Fearfulness and guilt**

Feelings of guilt are associated with feelings of anxiety and fear (McKeating 1970).

Coral remembered the time when she was 'not happy at all', she added that her mother would be blamed if she did anything wrong. Guilt for her was an easy progression as she fearfully tried to deal with her direct witnessing of the violence. Any intervention she had tried had 'made everything worse', and so she 'had just left her (her mother)'. The agony of abandoning the closest person to her, the only one she was able to talk to, her mother, must have been acute. Despite her mother's efforts in reassuring Coral, she did still feel guilty. The guilt, the shame and the fear became a terrible burden.

This is echoed by Rose who viewed herself as an object of contempt and shame. Lewis & Granic describe this emotional state as "a sudden loss of control, coupled with a heightened state of self awareness" (2000: 24). There were repeated experiences of abuse which led to an arousal of "cognitive themes of abandonment and worthlessness coupled with hopelessness and guilt" (ibid: 378). Rose fell to this awful state as she considered suicide.

"I used to write things down like I wish I was dead and things like that ... I just wished that I weren't around most of the time ..." Rose: 42).



As the feelings of fear were activated, Rose appears to have experienced a decline in her ability to view herself without a sense of shame. As fearfulness took hold, she recognised later that she had reached a place where depression had taken hold and she needed to find ways of concealing the fear from others and even from herself.

"... I just buried myself into my school work and just pretend what was going on at home weren't really happening" (Rose: 43).

Her effort to entirely conceal her fear and guilt was almost completely successful. However, her fear that anyone would get to know about the abuse was overridden, because of a stronger feeling that it was emotionally crucial and safe for her to confide in someone. She knew this when she decided to tell a friend what was happening.

"It was kind of good cos me, me and her, we could relate quite ... how can I put it? It was just nice to know someone was there ... it was like I could talk and not be frightened of it going anywhere because she knew what I was going through" (Rose: 44).

Rose found a state of 'not being frightened' which was simply 'good' and 'nice', and allowed her to feel the warmth of empathy. This emotional change is echoed later by Rose as she revealed the palliative 'relief' which formed a 'release' for her when her mother admitted her part in the pain.

"...she does now say I have put you through a lot and things like that, and she does feel like bad for what she's put me and my sister through" (Rose: 45).

Circumstances appear to have an important bearing on whether or not fear can be released and concealment challenged. The context for Rose was dependent on feeling safe, so that she felt that the threat had been adequately removed. As avoidance and escape from threats are the primary reactions (Rachman 1998: 6), it would appear that something deeper had occurred which enabled Rose to share her fears.

### **Fearfulness and concealment**

Coral succeeded in completely concealing her pain from the outside world.

"I thought I'd speak to my mum, and I didn't think I needed to speak to anyone else" (Coral: 15).

Later, however, in the refuge, her mother challenged Coral's dependence on her, and acknowledged her daughter's need to talk to someone else.

"... she thinks that I didn't talk to her about everything" (Coral: 16).

Coral agreed that this was the case.

"I didn't want always to talk about it because I was scared I would make her upset and I was scared ...".

Talking to her mother heightened her fearfulness, and so avoidance and concealment were used to manage the situation. However, the refuge did provide a circumstance for change when she was introduced to a support worker.

"I think that really helped me because I was keeping a lot of stuff inside and I didn't really want to talk to anyone about it .... Just knowing that he (support worker) was there to help and that he wasn't like my dad ..." (Coral: 19).

Coral had overcome her fearfulness which had previously prevailed, through her recognition that there existed 'other people **out there** that can help' (emphasis added). Rachman (1998) describes the Rose and Coral's concealment of their suffering as 'repression', and with the blocking of intolerable memories which arise from intolerable levels of anxiety there comes an associated blocking of the present suffering (1998: 49). Rose does however allow a small conduit through the blocking, which offers her the possibility of 'not being frightened', as she shares experiences with a friend who understood in the fullest sense. Her friend also knew what it was like to be fearful, and they were able to "kind of relate really well" Rose: 43).

Coral's effort to conceal what was happening was to conceal herself in her room.

"Most of the time I would just sit in my room ..." (Coral: 15).

Otherwise she conveys a compulsive effort to carry on., independent and autonomous.

"I didn't think I needed to speak to anyone".

"I just got on with my work and ... did things I had to".

This state of being is due in part to fear being acquired by conditioning or other learning (Rachman 1998). If being fearful is an aspect of your life which has been learnt, then it seems probable that cognitive means are employed to manage fears. There is a "need to exert a great deal of effort in an attempt to control fear and anxiety by cognitive means because these emotions can be so dominating" (ibid: 52). Coral and Rose used 'work' and 'writing' to handle their fear, employing activities which require effort and mental application at the time of their greatest pain.

### **Managing fearfulness**

Rose specifically states that her writing was a 'release' and a 'comfort'. The conduit through the blocking of the suffering appears to be the mental absorption. As Coral listened to Eminem, she considered the differences between the artist and her father. The thoughtfulness of her isolation appears to have determined her release and comfort. As the intellect and imagination were engaged, there followed a means of overcoming fear which diverted consciousness and released pain.

Worrying may be seen as a symptom of fearfulness. Here cognitive processes may be recognised as truly debilitating. Impairment caused by worries and the distortions which may inherently accompany worries (Rachman 1998: 27), may both exist.

"I'm still worried about him (dad) finding out where we live".

How long is it since you actually left?

"About three or four years ago" (Karl: 34).

"Yes, I always do (worry about mum). That's why I don't go out anymore (Terry: 24).

The impact of fear can be seen in seemingly illogical concerns which traverse time and place. Terry cannot remove himself from his mother, because the threat is perceived as real and strong still. Karl views his father as a continuing threat, despite the passing of 'three or four years'.

### **Fear and anxiety**

Fears and anxieties may be defined differently. Whereas fears may have a specific focus, anxiety may be felt without a clear idea of the cause. Fear may be seen to decline once a

threat has been removed, whilst anxiety remains persistent, prolonged and puzzling (Rachman 1998). The pervasive and persistent uneasiness which characterises anxiety can often follow fear (ibid: 6). However, the young people do recognise the source of their worries. The intensity of their feelings, surrounded as they have been by abuse of the cruellest kind, has resulted in a prolonged and slow diffusing of the fear. Despite the removal of the fear inducing threats, in that they no longer are in direct contact with the perpetrators, these young people remain open to the possibility of the return of the threat so their worries remain.

The thought processes which accompany fear induced worrying were not fully perceived or expressed by Scott. His experience of worry was based on him having frightening premonitions of when the abuse was going to happen and he experienced a mix of emotions.

"Not very happy ... worried ... miserable ... angry" (Scott: 5).

The power of the disempowering emotions prevented him from responding or doing anything when he knew the abuse was going to start.

"I felt I could (do something) but there was something holding me back like ... fear or something" (Scott: 5).

Fearfulness requires a response which embodies avoidance. However, when a relationship is threatened or endangered the emotional response is anxiety and anger (Bowlby 1988). "A feature of attachment behaviour is the intensity of emotion that accompanies it. If it is threatened there is jealousy, anxiety and anger" (ibid: 79).

Scott goes on to describe the times when he stepped in to help his mother.

"Sometimes I actually got in the argument I tried to stop it and ..." (Scott: 6).

Clearly on these occasions the fear which had held him back before was now replaced by another emotion, perhaps anger. As the focus at this time is on the fearful voice, it is interesting to note that fear did not prevail. Bowlby reflects that anger and anxiety are both from the same etymological root (1998: 80). It appears that one emotion may be interchangeable with the other, that conversion from one to the other does occur and that the crossover is easily facilitated.

The young people who express their fearfulness less appear to express their anger more. This idea is supported by Rachman who describes fear as "a combination of tension and unpleasant anticipation" (1998: 2). This definition seems to point to the idea that contained within fear there is a combustible element based on 'tension', which might get inflamed into anger. As Scott tried to stop his 'mum getting hurt' the anger he felt was turned on him.

"I usually got shouted at or threatened ..." (Scott: 6).

This example is given here because it demonstrates a metamorphic, mutating quality contained within fear.

Fearful emotions do dissipate however, and Coral describes this process in relation to the fear that she had had in the past that her mother would go back to her father. This was an intense feeling for her because she had seen her mother return more than once. She was tense and apprehensive.

"I was scared it (my talking to mum) might make her want to take him back again" (Coral: 16).

The process of removing her fear was grounded in observing her mother's actions and applying her knowledge of her mother in shaping her conclusions.

"... we missed dad so mum started to try and get us to have contact with him. So she would drop us off ... but then he would always just like get in the car with her ... when she knew that wasn't right because she was bringing us there to see him ... she didn't want to see him. So in the end she stopped doing that. ... but I think that she realised that she couldn't take him back no matter what" (Coral: 17).

Coral's worries were gone. The specific fear had dispersed. It had been observed by her that her mother had at last decided not that she wouldn't go back, but that she wouldn't take her husband back. A shift in her mother's view of herself had occurred which Coral had witnessed, and this was enough for her to accept that the threat she had feared had gone.

### **Fearfulness and behaviour**

Fears seem almost to evaporate at times, probably because a behaviour has been found which diminishes the feeling. Rachman (1998) explains that behaviour which successfully reduces fear will be reinforced and will be strengthened. Karl felt scared when he went to live in the refuge.

"I started playing with the other children that was there ... we used to do puppet

shows" (Karl: 37).

Karl was able to 'ignore' his scared feelings as he played. He found that he could, and so he continued to play and spend time with the other children.

"... there was this woman like that who came in every week and she done different things with us and I like painted a shirt and that with like fabric paints" (Karl: 37).

He had similar feelings when he knew his mother had decided to leave, and sensing his mother's fear, he too lived in dread of his father finding out. There was the time before when his mother had 'got caught' when she had tried to leave. He reflected on the risks. Unlike the fear he had at the refuge which he could ignore, this other fear had remained for 'three or four years', supporting the idea that his previous experiences had prolonged and intensified his feelings of disquiet and inadequacy (McKeating 1970). Fearfulness becomes a festering influence, an irrational dread.

"I'm still worried about him (dad) finding out where we live .... Mum's got a new boyfriend ... I mean husband now ...that's good ..." (Karl: 39).

### **Fearfulness and close relationships**

Fear which is more forward looking but which is rooted in painful experiences is spoken of with sadness. Relationships have been both damaging and lost. Fathers have had their place removed, but their influence remains.

"That's why I don't call him dad anymore unless I'm with him. I don't believe he's my dad. I'm nothing like him. That's what I'm scared of now ... I don't



really want a girlfriend ... I want one but I don't think I should have one cos I treat her like my dad did" (Terry: 30).

"If your dad was violent, you'll be violent when you're older" (Terry: 30).

"...I just thought that I didn't want to grow up and marry or anything ...

because all men are the same ..." (Coral: 19).

The transference of fear from one situation to another, from one relationship to others is indicative of the intensity of the original fearfulness. Where there has been what Rachman (1998) calls a history of threat, there remains a bias favouring that threat. This develops into a form of vulnerability or proneness which leads to a continuation of those fears, and a generalisation of the application of the threat. The original threat may have receded, but Terry & Coral acknowledge the price which they feel impelled to pay. However, even in these cases of generalised fear, the young people were able to recognise an end to their fears.

"... but then, now that I've met \_ I know there's other people out there that can help and that they're not just there to ruin our life ..." (Coral)

"... I don't trust men after everything and, but he (the support worker) sat down and basically said, he basically showed me it was ok to talk" (Rose).

Significant relationships acted as an antidote to the generalised fears felt by the young people. As their worst fears were dismissed and repudiated by caring people, they were able to feel the empowerment which comes from overcoming suffering. They were then

able to recognise that the generalisations were irrational and could be discredited by an acceptance of much needed help and support.

Scott accepted help because he recognised that he needed it. His anxiety and anger had become so overwhelming that he had been abusive to his mother and had been arrested. It was at this point that Scott's fearful anticipation of what might lie ahead motivated him to change.

"... I thought lots about it and um I decided I'm going to change now" (Scott).

Rachman (1998) writes that fears do develop motivating properties. As Scott accepted help, he found that the support workers were 'very impressed' with him and he continued to successfully reduce the fear of prison and punishment, whilst increasing his own moral strength (ibid: 57). In this way, Scott's fear energised his behaviour and he was able to stay motivated so that he was able to make what he had come to realise were necessary changes.

### **Aggressiveness**

Bowlby wrote, "All those who respond to a loss with ... anger, a feeling of guilt for having been in some degree responsible, is playing a part" (1981: 363). The association between fear and guilt has been drawn previously, but now there would appear to be a similar interdependence or link between anger and guilt. The emotionality of anger and fear may result in a complex interchange of feelings which may be difficult to untangle, decipher or differentiate. Aggressiveness may be the result of anger. However, "Not all acts of aggression are preceded by anger" (Goldstein & Keller 1987: 39). The motivation

behind aggressiveness and aggressive acts and behaviour may be complex and varied, but it does seem that it may perhaps result from experiences of loss when the state of emotionality is dominated by anger, fear or guilt.

"I threw a cup at my dad. ...And it just made things worse ... so I stopped joining in with her (mum)" (Coral: 14).

Aggressiveness may be seen as a form of behaviour which is directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another (Krahe 2001). Coral threw the cup at her dad, with the intent presumably of hitting him with it and hurting him. The occasion had been at a time when her dad was being violent to her mum. For the most part, Coral had been 'pushed away' during these episodes, but there had been times when she had directly witnessed the abuse, and on one occasion had stepped in to do what she could to stop the violence. She immediately observed the adverse consequences of her aggressive act, and never repeated it.

However, in a different situation, in a street somewhere in London, she again reviled against her dad.

"... I'd seen him, and we had a huge argument, a lot of crying and screaming in the middle of the street, so ..." (Coral: 18).

The crying and screaming seemed to be describing her own feelings as she battled with her father. It was the last time that she had seen him, choosing to avoid contact with him since then. Her descriptions of her father reveal another feeling, a kind of frustration

resulting from his several and continuous attempts to convince both her mother and herself that he was going to change. However, the 'change' he achieved was short lived.

"He said he'd change before and this is the first time when we left ... no... the second time and then mum took him back, and he changed like for two days and then he was back to his normal self. So I knew that it was all an act. He wasn't going to change" (Coral: 18).

It is significant that this highly emotive experience in the street had been her last contact with her dad. It was her closing denunciation. Krahe (2001) describes this as a kind of aggression which is used to restore justice and also to end a state of frustration. For her, the crying and screaming were the culmination of years of emotional abuse and frustration brought about by her inability to intervene or change the situation. Her frustration would have been added to as her mother repeatedly gave her father more chances and a pattern of repeated failures and further abuse had occurred, culminating in an outpouring of aggressiveness which flowed when the opportunity arose.

The occasion of Coral's outburst has some interesting characteristics. Geen outlines how aggressiveness is the result of a need to retaliate following an attack from another person (1990: 43). The retaliation may take the form of verbal aggressiveness or an insult or it may be physical. There may be haranguing or badgering. As Coral felt sufficiently empowered to retaliate, she was able to recognise the perfect moment. Her separation from her dad had been implemented by her mum. Her mum had put a stop to any contact. Coral had begun to build a life beyond the discord and stress of her past life. It

Analysis: views through a chink in the wall: voice relational analysis and 'feeling' voices

appears that she was perfectly placed to 'turn tables' on her dad. Geen (1990) does go on to describe how research on family violence has indicated that the family influences aggression in children in two ways.

First children are 'trained' in aggression. Family life provides situations which elicit aggression, and if aggressiveness is apparent in family life, children and young people are more likely to exhibit aggression. Second, where there is family violence, a stressful and aversive situation is created which may result in discord between all family members (Geen 1990: 49).

### **Elicitors of aggression**

Coral does in fact talk very little about feelings of aggressiveness, but it seems clear that in moments of deep frustration and strong inner desires to avenge, she is moved to hurt her dad. Geen explores the idea of elicitors of aggression which arise out of interpersonal conflict. Examples given are frustration, attack and harassment (1990: xii). The circumstances of Coral's battle with her dad appear to indicate the possibility of the presence of all of these elicitors. Her dad had searched her out at a time when she was staying with a relative close by.

"... and he was like kind of hanging around in that area, and I'd gone to the shop and I'd seen him ..." (Coral: 18).

Her dad had been told that she was in the area, and had deliberately tried to see her without any planning or warning. The feelings which had been experienced by Coral when she'd 'seen him' must have been very powerful. She had not been prepared in any

way for his appearance and she had been confronted by him. Earlier she had confided her longing for a loving relationship with her dad.

"I was upset because I obviously love my dad but I knew that it (leaving him) was the right thing and that if she (mum) didn't do it then she never would" (Coral: 16).

Her loyalty and love for her dad was stretched beyond her ability to feel it. Confusion and pain resulting from years of powerlessness, frustration and hurt had caused her to argue fiercely with her dad, and reject all possibility of any future happiness.

"... when I was arguing with dad I just thought that I didn't want to grow up and marry or anything ... because all men are the same..." (Coral: 19).

This strongly negative emotional state created the potential for aggressiveness and it would seem that Coral's background of abuse motivated her reaction (Geen 1990).

Ridgway writes of young people who sometimes react in this way. "They've learnt in their families that the only way to communicate is to hurt others, because they have been hurt themselves" (1973: 33). The aggressiveness is a way of protesting, and "all their words are angry words" (ibid: 67).

### **Aggressiveness and relationships**

Scott confided that all his relationships at home and at school were problematic because of his 'not being nice'.

"Lately because I used to be ... a pain in the .... Because I wasn't really nice towards my family and school was really rubbish and I wasn't being nice

towards my teachers. ...I was using abuse towards my mother. I wasn't really proud of that and I had to get arrested" (Scott: 8-9).

No one appears to have been immune to Scott's 'pain'. His words and his behaviour reflect the only way left to him to communicate with others and so he uses his suffering as a vocabulary. His words are angry words. His relationship particularly with his mother is stained by aggressive abuse. When asked how he felt at this time he could only string together a series of painful feelings.

"Not very happy ... worried ... miserable ... angry ... (He laughed quietly) (Scott: 5).

The anger was there but it was splattered with sadness and anxiety which appeared to act as precursors. Aggressiveness for Scott was a way of communicating and possibly a safety valve too. Where there are high levels of emotional arousal, aggression can become a way of defusing feelings (Geen 1990: 1).

Scott learns an alternative means of coping once he sees the consequences of aggressiveness.

"But lately my attitude has been changing, so ... it's been good ...and I thought a lot about it ... I decided I'm going to change now, because this is a bit silly and lately I've been getting really well (Scott: 9).

Thinking for Scott was a crucial element to changing his aggressive coping behaviour. He admitted that he still argued but 'just the odd occasional teenage arguments' with his mum. The desire to hurt back had become a desire to help and support other young people.

### **Aggressiveness and harm**

The dissipation of aggressiveness is also present in Rose's story. Aggressive feelings can be directed towards oneself, and this seems likely as Rose became intent on self harm and injury. If we define aggressiveness as an intent to harm, then it would appear that self harm is intrinsically aggressive. Motivations which incite self injury are complex and varied, and they are not clear. Rose expresses her reasons.

"I was going through a stage of self harming ... slitting my wrists and things like that, but I don't ... it wasn't properly or nothing. It was just to get attention back then ... (Rose: 46).

Being 'a stage' indicates a transient or temporary part of Rose's story which does however need to be recorded. Its significance and purpose, which was 'to get attention' has to be an extraordinary revelation in the light of her having to cope with her mum's depression and alcohol misuse at the time, as well as the legacy of years of living with abuse. It is probably impossible to imagine the intensity of Rose's feelings.

Rentrew (1997) defines 'irritable aggression' as elicited by a variety of stressors, for example pain, fatigue, frustration and deprivation; isolation may produce and increase irritability. Rose's isolation at the age of 13 was almost complete. There had been only one friend with whom she could confide, and her mum was absent emotionally. Her aggressiveness had been turned upon her little sister, and her nastiness to her was a reflection of her loneliness and highly irritable state.

"I don't know why I'd just get really angry with her really quickly and I'd just shout at her, and one time, I was really nasty to her, when we were left alone, I



tipped coke over her head and I ... I think that's really nasty really ... she was the closest thing I could have a go at, shout at and be really nasty to ... I just had no other person really" (Rose: 46).

The isolation incurred from the circumstances of domestic abuse had been exacerbated by Rose's subsequent circumstances. Krahe writes, "Children exposed to abuse and neglect were shown to display higher levels of aggression" (2001: 54). The spiteful treatment of her sister Rose views as 'really nasty' and it occurred 'really quickly'. The irritable nature of what she did and the suddenness of what she felt indicates the presence of a number of stressors (Rentrew 1997) and an obvious isolation 'when we were left alone'.

The suffering of the past and the present had led to an emotionality which was both "negative and antisocial that has little to do with mental health and well being" (Krahe 2001: 10).

### **Aggressiveness and violence**

The endorsement of beliefs which approve of aggressiveness (Krahe 2001: 40) can be sensed as violence is defined by Terry. When asked about his sister's boyfriend's attitude to violence, Terry explains,

"Only if he wants to be (violent). He gets the choice. He's never violent to girls.

He's violent to me but for a joke, he don't ..." (Terry: 30).

There are some kinds of violence which are not intrinsically aggressive, but Terry believes that some violence or aggressive behaviour is justified.

"If I was violent to anyone it would be to someone who was hurting someone for no reason" (Terry: 30).

Aggressive feelings and actions should be used to right wrongs. Terry has made a judgement here about the appropriateness of aggression under some circumstances. His emotionality is dependant upon his being able to distinguish the precise nature of aggression (Pugmire 1998) and how it should be realised. Pugmire gives an example of this when he writes, "Hate can realise itself variously in elation, dejection, anxiousness or spite" (1998: 12). How Terry shifts from one realisation of aggression to another is characteristic of his story. He believes that the safe expression of some of his feelings can be achieved through boxing and wrestling. This supports the idea of catharsis which purports that any expression of aggressive feelings reduces the likelihood of subsequent aggression (Krahe 2001: 213).

" ... my brother's in a mood or something, he tries to start a fight ... I just push him over. I don't see the point of hitting him ... what we're doing now is ... it doesn't hurt us ... it's keeping us out of trouble and we're playing but we're doing like boxing and wrestling ... he loves wrestling, I love boxing ... one rule is that he's not allowed to punch me ... just get our energy away from fighting" (Terry: 26).

Using what appears to be aggressive experiences to divert energy away from actually fighting is a way of coping which works for Terry. As his anger is aroused, he adheres to the principle that "attack is the best means of defence" (Bowlby 1981: 363) and uses his feelings as an "affective stress reaction" (Goldstein & Keller 1987: 43).

Analysis: views through a chink in the wall: voice relational analysis and 'feeling' voices

Aggressive responses in the form of retaliation is another realisation of the emotion which Terry subscribes to. When his dad calls him a donkey, he calls his dad a donkey. When his dad publicly disowns his daughter, Terry publicly disowns his dad.

"That's why I don't call him dad anymore ... I don't believe he's my dad (: 30).

Here are powerful images of Terry's wish to hurt back in response to hurt. However, it seems probable that Terry's various realisations of aggressiveness are learnt (Krahe 2001), but there is a deep fear of it also.

"That's what I'm scared about now ... I don't really want a girlfriend ... I want one but I don't think I should have one cos I treat her like my dad did. And it was on TV about the violence ... if your dad was violent, you'll be violent too. ...but I've got his blood" (Terry: 30).

Terry was exposed to the most horrific violence and aggression perpetrated by his father against his mother. He too had suffered physical and emotional abuse. The abuse had continued during contact arrangements. He had learnt from his sister's boyfriend that there was another way, but the terrible fear remained that he would not be able to lose the biological and psychological heritage given him by his father.

So the conclusion appears to remain that for Terry a multiple connection to aggressiveness is his way of making sense of his life and his family. Although the realisations appear to possess conflicting ways of defining aggressiveness, Terry's story powerfully demonstrates the nascent and unique qualities exhibited as aggressiveness by individual young people.

## **Bitterness**

Where abuse has been present, a child may find it difficult to distinguish and express appropriate emotions (Crompton 1998: 144), resulting in interpersonal difficulties. When resentful feelings find expression in bitter words or violent action, the underlying motivations may vary or be unclear. However, there does appear to be a prevailing circumstance which Varma describes as a general sense of deprivation and loss which evokes "hate, resentment and revenge" (1993: 1).

"My dad gave all our stuff to this man across the road like our swings and that ... and he said that my bike rusted away in the garage ... but he sold, he gave our electric scooters away. He said that he was going to give it all to my auntie who lives in \_ . Then when my auntie went to meet him to get the stuff ... um ... he didn't have any ... he wasn't even there" (Karl: 35).

## **Bitterness and loss**

Karl's bitterness at the loss of his possessions which clearly meant a considerable amount to him was attributable to the actions of his dad. The blame for the misfortune of his losses was being ascribed to his father without reservation. Accusations flowed and developed beyond the original wrong doing. His dad had consolidated Karl's resentful feelings towards him by failing to care for his bike, which had rusted away, and then neglecting to keep to an arrangement which would have in some measure eased Karl's feelings of loss and abandonment. However, Karl's dad had become in his son's eyes an uncaring person who had blatantly and mercilessly increased Karl's feelings of loss.

"I don't speak to him anymore ... he only sent two letters that's all ... he doesn't

really care" (Karl: 34).

The humiliation of being let down in relation to loss is indicative of an understandable reaction to injury and indifference (Strawson 1974: 14), which results in a complete breakdown of the relationship. Karl has withdrawn his good will towards his dad, and has decided on disapprobation and condemnation. Condemning his dad to silence, of not speaking to him anymore, is a form of revenge which suitably 'fits the crime' and which reflects Karl's bitterness. This selective form of inaction Varma (1993) asserts is a way of communicating dislike. This is also reflected in Karl's description of his dad before he left with his mum.

"Because he never did anything. He would just lie down on the sofa and that was it ... he was coming in from work on the sofa and that would be it, and whenever he wasn't on the sofa he was probably arguing with my mum or something"

(Karl: 35).

### **Bitterness and resentment**

Bitterness and resentment can be expressed in many ways. "Teasing, mocking, deriding, jeering, ridiculing, sneering, taunting, belittling, blaming, accusing, criticising" (Varma 1993: 73) are some of the behaviours which are used to communicate the underlying hurt and felt misfortune. Karl's feelings seem to be expressing criticism and sneering. He is overtly explaining and acknowledging his dissatisfaction with his dad, and his reasoning would in some measure logically justify his rejection of him. This justification and the seemingly honourable position taken up by Karl might perhaps act in some measure as a palliative, lessening the sorrow attending another loss, the loss of his dad.

Loss and injury do appear to be pivotal to feelings of resentment and bitterness. There may be a lessening of these feelings through an inner belief supporting the idea that the person responsible for the injury or loss is in some way abnormal. This can lessen the feelings of loss and bitterness.

"... he (dad) was going to take her (mum) to the psycho hospital. ... you know the one near \_ . He tried to take her there ... but I said he should be the one going there" (Terry: 30).

Terry states how bitter he feels later as he describes how his dad lied about his daughter.

"He (dad) pretended he didn't know her (his daughter). I went 'You've got a daughter too', and he goes 'No I aint'. That really hurt me. He used to always to do stuff like that ... he pretended he didn't know her but thought it was a joke but it wasn't funny ... it's not funny" (Terry: 31).

This last 'joke' by his dad was seen by Terry as a final injury which took away any vestige of remaining respect held by him for his dad.

"I didn't really have any respect for him anymore. I did have a little bit but I don't have respect for him anymore" (Terry: 31).

The final resolution of his feelings for his dad was controlled in part by Terry's acceptance of his father's need for some kind of psychological treatment. This was due to his recognition that his mother did not have a problem, but that his father did.

However, despite this realisation which Strawson (1974) states can allow the injured person to feel less resentment and malevolence towards the offender, Terry could not

"forgive or forswear the resentment" (1974: 6). He can only withdraw any goodwill he might have felt because of the overwhelming disapproval he felt for his 'warped and deranged' parent (ibid: 8).

Resentment can arise through feelings of unfairness and deprivation. Coral longed for a close relationship with her dad, but this longing was utterly frustrated.

"I would just listen to Eminem because he's so close to his daughter and he writes about her and sings about her and I used to just wish that dad would just be like that with me ... but obviously he wasn't" (Coral: 15).

"He was a lot closer to my brothers than he was to me" (Coral: 14).

"When we were in the refuge we missed dad so mum started to try and get us to have contact with him ... but then he would always like just get in the car with her and tell me to go into my auntie's house" (Coral: 17).

"... because when I was arguing with dad I just thought that I didn't want to grow up and marry or anything" (Coral: 19).

"I was upset (when mum decided to leave) because obviously I love my dad ..."  
(Coral: 16).

The desperate need for her dad's love and a closeness with him remains a strangely powerful part of Coral's story. She appears to cling to the impossible as 'obviously' he couldn't be the dad she dreamed and hoped for. The loss and the emotional void and resentment which she clearly feels because of her father's inability to meet her need is devastating for her. Again, as with the other young people she searches for some form of

revenge and cuts physical ties with him. Physically and emotionally she tries to remove herself from his influence. She has withdrawn.

“Yeh, at the time he gave me his number and said that if I wanted to ring him or anything I could but at the time ...because obviously when you see him, he’s going to try and be all nice and it was making me think, maybe he has changed but then I got home and then I knew he hadn’t really” (Coral: 18).

Coral chose not to contact her dad again, and she had had no contact with him since a terrible argument in the street at their last meeting. For her, the changing part was a prerequisite for a newfound closeness with him. This she had finally realised was not going to happen. Resignation had resulted, a reaction to her dad’s indifference and inability to change and be close to her.

Injured and let down, Coral recognises the male oppression experienced by herself and her mother. Her fear and resentment towards men had eased as she had met with men who “were not just there to ruin your life”. Her life had been ruined for a time by her dad whom she loved. Her response to this terrible personal loss was to exclude him from her life (Varma 1993).

### **Bitterness and injury**

Bitterness attending injury and loss associated with their fathers was felt by all these young people. Rose’s hatred was overtly directed towards those who represented the social Services.

“I hated them. I hated them. I thought you are not taking me away from my



family, especially my mum" (Rose: 44).

The Social Services had become involved in Rose's family through concerns about "me and my sister being left alone ... in the home...". Varma (1993) states that children and young people are capable of communicating their feelings in a sophisticated, strategic and crafty way (: 73). Rose's opinion of the questions that were being asked her was one based on mistrust, resentment and fear. She was asked one particular question, she recounts, which required her to be 'crafty'.

"... the social services asked me was who do you love better out of your mum and dad? And obviously I love my mum because I hated my step-dad, but because I didn't want to be taken away, I said I loved them both the same" (Rose: 45).

The outcome of this interchange was that Rose stayed with her mum. Her mum stopped leaving her and her sister alone at home. Rose had reasoned that if she had shown she had a preference for her mum, then there was a greater likelihood of her being taken into care, as her mum had been neglectful. Once the Social Services had been told that step-dad was still very much part of the picture it appeared to Rose that they lost interest. Rose had accomplished the removal of persons she deeply resented. It is interesting to note that Rose always refers to these people by their department. Her bitter feelings have depersonalised them, so that they have become people without any real identity.

In this instance, Rose is clear in her own mind about the cause of her resentment. There is less clarity when her sister and her step- dad become the significant players.

"When my mum was pregnant with her ... and then he (step-dad) came round and he like would put on a show and he'd like pretend like to play with me and things like that, and then I thought, ah, he actually does care about me ... but then as soon as my sister come along, it was like she was his own flesh and blood, I was pushed out" (Rose: 46).

Rose expresses her bitter resentment and humiliation at the injury of her step-dad's pretence followed by his rejection. As Varma (1993) states humiliations of the past may lead to a need for revenge. Blame was assigned for the most part to her little sister, as she was an easily acquired scapegoat. When she was asked why she had been "nasty" to her sister, she was unsure about her feelings.

"... maybe it was because she was the only person I could take something out on, because I was always stuck at home with her and because I was so young ...".  
"So I don't know if that's the reason because maybe I was jealous, I don't know"  
"She was the closest thing I could have a go at, shout at and be really nasty to ...  
I had no other person really" (Rose: 46).

The emotional complexity caused by Rose's vulnerability becomes clear. She feels bitterness towards her step-dad who had pushed her out. Equally, she had felt isolated and denied the love of another person – she had no other person except her little sister. She resented being 'stuck at home' with her, with the expectation that she should provide the care for her when she was 'so young'. The life of a young carer is all about the deprivation of her own needs. Rose's story reveals the pressures and torments of a young person who was forced to be the adult.

"I was the adult ... Obviously, I've still got that adult instinct in me, but I always will have because I've had it since the age of five" (Rose: 47).

Rose had managed to retain her relationship with her mother, through her willingness to forgive. Although injured by her mother's actions, she was able to "talk more and we just bond more". Twinges of guilt and resentment remain however, as Rose explains her desire for more independence and stronger emotional ties with her friends.

"I've kind of pushed my mum out which makes me feel really bad sometimes".

Resentment and bitterness are the opposites of gratitude (Strawson 1974). Perhaps, Rose can only forgive so much as there has been so little to be grateful for.

Concluding the disempowering emotionality contained within the constructs of fearfulness, aggressiveness and bitterness, there needs to be a final acknowledgement of the complexity, ambiguity and inter-relationships which exist between the chosen emotions. Fearfulness has been found to be associated with aggressiveness and bitterness, and other associations have been revealed. Other named emotions such as guilt, resentment, jealousy, confusion and anxiety have been found to be intertwined with fearfulness, aggression and bitterness, and their effects have merged and appeared in individual ways. The individual nature of each young person's emotional experience in relation to disempowering emotions is clear, and needs to be viewed in the context of the labyrinth-like journey locating the suffering voice.

### **Humanising emotionality and abuse: locating the healing voice.**

Before negotiating the territories associated with more positive feelings, there is a need to pause for a moment to reflect on the possibility that there is intrinsically contained within an emotional traversing of a story, a link between those suffering, difficult, dark and troublesome emotions and those which embrace healing. Grof & Grof write, "The positive feelings often seem all the more significant and intense when contrasted with the difficult ones encountered previously" (1990: 46).

The implication here is that there seems to exist a longitudinal relationship between the two, that humanising and empowering emotions follow the darker, more troublesome territories. Stories do possess longitudinal elements and it would seem that most people have to delve into and experience the darker areas of life "before they reach a state of freedom" (ibid: 46). Humanising emotionality is focused on three constructs, those of compassion, hopefulness and peacefulness.

### **Compassion**

Berlant defines the emotion compassion as a "humanising emotion" (2004: 1). If an emotion is to become humane, it will need to demonstrate consideration for others. This must be the hallmark of such an emotion, and compassion does exhibit a social relation which incorporates a sufferer and an onlooker. Further to this, the onlooker is affected by the suffering of another, and is brought to an emotional state which appears to demand a response which may lead to action. Fox (1990) describes compassion as learning

interdependence. It consists in the realisation that we are not unique, that compassion is a core constituent of our common humanity. The togetherness feelings arising from or possibly leading to compassionate yearnings are perhaps the most crucial aspect of experiences steeped in pain, injury or suffering.

"... She (my friend) has problems with her dad but she can't talk to me about it in case it brings up about my dad" (Coral: 20).

Her friend is concerned about the emotional impact of her experiences on Coral, and withholds these experiences, as she responds to the suffering of Coral. Awareness of suffering does seem to have had a marked effect upon the actions of the friend, but what is most interesting is the awareness of Coral as to why her friend should remain distant around the causes of Coral's suffering.

"I say to her all the time that if she needs to talk she can but ...I think she's worried" (Coral: 20).

The friend is an instrument of compassion and anxiety, which counter one another and prevent the full expression of compassion which might involve both young people sharing and exchanging their common suffering. Fear overcomes one and interplays with compassion, allowing a revised, limited form of compassion to exist. Nevertheless, compassion is present, and exhibited by a caring concern for Coral.

"There was a time when a girl was all upset and I helped her out and after all, she was mean to me and she said, 'Why are you so kind?' and I said because you're my friend. So she stopped being mean" (Scott: 8).

### **Compassion and empathy**

Compassion in its fullest sense appears to be unconditional. As Scott reached out to the suffering friend, he was met with a 'mean' response. But it in no way affected the stream of compassion which Scott felt.

"I've helped out quite a lot of my friends. I persuaded my friend to stop self harming their self" (Scott: 8).

The act of persuasion had followed the feeling of compassion. Scott's feeling voice of compassion had led to powerful outcomes, which he saw as being very significant.

"When I started to help my friends – I thought I'm pretty good at this ... I was doing pretty well" (Scott: 9).

Scott's story describes the tremendous outcomes for him and for his friends, due to the inner prompting of an emotion which led him from his own suffering to the suffering of others. Scott clearly expresses the pleasure which comes from relieving the pain of others. It is a remarkable outcome which at this stage can only be described in simplistic terms. However, there is evidence to support the more complex idea that the link between the suffering of one to the suffering of another is a prerequisite to being able to feel compassion, and that compassionate feelings can only exist where there has been personal experiences of suffering.

As interpretive insights are gained and developed, the Scott's emotional journey from abused to abuser to compassionate friend will need to be individualistically constructed

step by step. However, the stress at this point needs to be placed on the power of emotions to completely redirect lives.

"I was really nasty to her (my sister) ... but I'm trying to make up for it now ...  
cos like I try to be there for her now" Rose: 46).

Rose demonstrates guilt at one level because it would be logical to assume that her wish to make amends for being 'really nasty' was a direct result of feeling bad about her behaviour. However, guilt on its own is not necessarily a humanising emotion, and it therefore appears that Rose is feeling something other than or more than guilt. Her responsibility towards a younger sister, 'being there for her' signifies a move to feeling compassion towards someone less powerful than herself, who has suffered at the hands of all those close to her.

Her own identification with the suffering, her own knowledge of the pain of her sister, and the part that she accepts she has played in that suffering have all assisted her in being able to identify that she needed to make some sort of emotional and social recompense. She recognises and acknowledges the interconnectedness between herself and her sister. She had to be 'there' for her sister. This kind of understanding Fox states as being "a primary component of compassion" (1990: 25).

The complex interplay between compassion and guilt is voiced by Rose in more than one way. Her story reveals a new found independence which is bringing her new friends and good experiences, and which brought about an awareness of her identity in a new way.

"I have been able to be myself ... it was like I started going out with friends

more and they were showing me different things" (Rose: 47).

Her identity was becoming apparent to her through new relationships, 'becoming herself really', but this had come to her at the cost of 'pushing' her mum out.

"I've kind of pushed my mum out, which makes me feel really bad sometimes but then I ... feel like when my mum had all that time to have ... to have all the time she wants with me but she never took it ... she pushed me out ... so I'm not trying to get back at her or nothing but I feel it's ok" (Rose: 47).

Rose feels 'really bad', but this is softened by the knowledge that the past has in some measure given her permission to act in the way she has. The loneliness and sense of abandonment are measured against the joys of independence and friendship. The latter are weightier and provide a convincing confirmation of the rightness of her chosen course. With that confirmation, there can only remain a small vestige of guilt.

Rose is not seeking vengeance. There is only a trace of bitterness invoked by her mother not wanting to use the time once available to be with her daughter. She does however recognise that some might interpret her actions as being vengeful, and is conscious of the outward appearance of her life. Her compassion towards her mother is evidence of her recognition of the affinity and interdependence between them, that her happiness is somehow dependent upon her mother's.

"... as long as I'm happy and as long as my mum's happy. I mean she's obviously going to have ups and downs in her life but then I'm going to be there to support her but as the child at the same time ..." (Rose: 47).



Rose has a plan which involves her being available to her mother whom she discerns as in need of support sometimes. Despite her life becoming richer and happier in its own right, Rose incorporates past responsibilities and any associated suffering into her plan because she feels it is the right thing to do. The ethical nature of her view reveals a compassionate morality which cannot dismiss the pain of the past. Thomas Aquinas stated that compassion is not pure feeling, but it also implies moral decision making followed by doing. Just as Rose weighed in the balance past suffering and present joys, she was able to recognise the importance of not entirely trying to forget the past, and of the need to continue to act upon it. This view of her emotional story seems to be derived from her relationships with her mother and her sister.

This interconnectedness is also reflected upon by Terry.

"My sister's boyfriend ....he's been a lot of help cos he, he was in worse than me ... and he taught me how to get through it" (Terry: 29).

The acceptance that someone who has had things worse than you can 'help' you expresses an awareness of the link created by suffering. As two abused individuals the connection is derived apparently from the abuse, and an acceptance of the other which in the case of Terry was far from his natural inclination.

"Cos he's coloured and I used to never have respect for coloured people.

If I see them now, I get to know them" (Terry: 31)

Compassionate recognition of the worth of another based on shared experiences of abuse overrides a firmly held prejudice. The 'help' that was given was accepted and valued by

Terry, and ultimately led to a significant change of view, based on an emotional turnaround from disrespect and suspicion to respect and admiration. The significance of this cannot be overestimated. Terry displays an interconnectedness with his sister's boyfriend which is powered by the ability to understand each other's suffering and which allows the one who has got through it to show compassion and help the other. As a result, the relationship which seemingly had begun with a negative opposition to 'coloured people' has undergone a major shift to acceptance and appreciation. Terry was happy to be accepted by one whom he had previously disapproved of and had wanted to discount.

"I said, could I be in his gang ? ... and he said, you can be in my gang (laughs quietly)" (Terry: 31).

### **Compassion and justice**

Berlant (2004) states that compassion is linked to the rights of others. As experiences are inherently unstable and our day to day survival is characterised by social and economic insecurity, there is inequality all around us. Towards those who are less fortunate, there may be an awakening consciousness based upon an emotional response. Individuals are 'affected' by the suffering of another. Fox refers to this as "compassionate justice" (1990: 11) which is a desire to move towards equality guided by the assumption that all human beings are equally human, and therefore possess equal fundamental rights.

Recognising the rights of another was clearly demonstrated by Terry's sister's boyfriend, and Terry, having received the teaching of how to get through it (past suffering), was

Analysis: views through a chink in the wall: voice relational analysis and 'feeling' voices

moved to reciprocate. As individuals identify with the rights of others, and perceive inequalities, discrepancies and violations, they may react in compassionate ways and possibly feel pleasure and relief from unwanted, unpleasant feelings as assistance is given and recompense made.

This aspect of compassion may also be discerned when Coral talks about what happened when she spoke to her mother about leaving her father.

"I think she knew all along that we had to get away, but I think she was staying there for our sake" (Coral: 12).

Her mother had decided to stay because the needs of the children had been more important than her own. Coral had seen a loving mother sacrifice her own life for her children, and had supported her in that decision for a while. However, the pain she had felt at witnessing the domestic violence against her mother proved too much for her.

"Well I was the one actually who told my mum that we had to get away and tried to make her do it" (Coral: 12)

The rightness of the decision to leave was unequivocal. Nothing could stand in the way of putting this decision into action. In this way, 'making' her mum do it, was fuelled by a passionate reaction which was drawn from both witnessing her mother's misery and a firm knowledge that it was right. The moral outrage of what was happening had resulted from Coral's compassionate desire to end her mother's suffering. She did what she had to do.

"... when she realised that I'd said it (that we had to get away) I think it

just made it clear that she had to get clear away" (Coral: 12).

The 'clear'ness of this statement seems to demonstrate the single mindedness of Coral at this time. The clarity of the rightness of the decision coupled with the clarity of her own moral position evoked by compassion resulted in a clear pathway ahead, to get away.

The compassion Coral felt for her mother changed their lives. Coral had entered into the suffering of her mother, she had identified with it, she knew it and she shared it. A oneness existed of deep feeling and ultimately of celebration. When she was asked how she felt when her mother believed what she was saying, she laughed.

"Happy ... that we were finally going to get away" (Coral: 13).

Joy and happiness which come from celebratory experiences can be experienced by those who have relieved the pain of others. Asked if he would change his past life if he could, Scott describes a present which celebrates the past.

"I don't know ... I might change something but if I change I might not be able to help people with what I want to do" (Scott: 7).

His desire to help people is a product of his own suffering and he recognises that the former would be put into jeopardy if the latter had not occurred. The link appears to be the formation of a lasting compassion which finds expression in his present life as he focuses on alleviating others' suffering. His life is all about 'doing' what he has learnt, and applying what has removed his pain to those who are suffering now. This ongoing compassion should be viewed as a celebration of a life once tormented but which is now rescued and productive.

An identification, an empathic connection to the suffering of another appears to be present in the voice of Scott. It also seems to be characteristic of Coral's response to her mother, and Rose's view of her mother and sister. The sister's boyfriend also reacts to Terry in a way which indicates a close identification with him. Nussbaum (1996) asserts that this identification allows the viewer "to judge what others need in order to flourish" (cited by Boler 1999: 160).

Terry explains the way his sister's boyfriend helped him.

"And he's been talking to us every time we were upset ... and tells us what it's like when it's better ...he says everything is gone. All the stress is gone ... so he makes us look forward to that and then we are not upset, simple words" (Terry: 29).

Terry recognised that he was helped in a way that was simple, but very effective. He was not upset anymore. Being able to judge what is needed is an invaluable gift which Terry was able to describe. He recognised what had been done for him to 'flourish', and was grateful. In his book *Death and Loss*, Leaman (1995) describes how from the point of view of the young people interviewed, few had found any teachers particularly helpful at the time of their loss. One example, Julie, had wanted to grieve quietly, and did speak of one particular teacher who had expressed her sympathy through ordinary actions. Julie had found this teacher especially helpful. Probably the essence of knowing what others need to flourish lies in recognising the individual and the differences that may exist as well as those commonalities which result in identification.

Analysis: views through a chink in the wall: voice relational analysis and 'feeling' voices

Every young person will respond to abuse and suffering in their own particular way. Perhaps the issue of knowing how to respond rests in the compassionate blending of a personal empathic identification with the individual with a respectful recognition of the uniqueness of each individual.

It appears that forms of personal identification require the emotion of empathy, an ability to imagine and associate with the feelings of another. Connections can occur within relationships which demand no action. However, compassion seems to involve empathy as a prerequisite to a motivating power to act. It seems to be true that the connectedness created by an empathic identification with another resolves itself in some way to become a force which enables an individual to feel in such a way as to be compelled to action.

The force seems to be created by a moral position which impels the righting of a wrong. The action is driven by a powerful impulse, a passionate realisation that the miseries of others are in some way connected to our own and that we bear some responsibility. However, this transition from empathy to compassion does not always automatically occur. Karl refers to his father's behaviour as interfering with this process.

"We don't get on well (my sister and I) ...because of my dad ... um ... affected the way we was with each other in \_ and my dad was like always on the sofa and that ..." (Karl: 38).

Karl's repetition of his father's behaviour as always being on the sofa, which he mentions three times, reflects a preoccupation with something which had destructive repercussions

but which clearly had a powerful impact on him. Whether this impact was a result of pity or some form of empathy is unclear, but Karl did continue to see his father and talk to him on the phone after the family break up. His awareness of his father's disinterest grew piece by piece as Karl builds an image beyond 'the sofa', which reveals an erosion of any positive feelings he might have had.

"I don't speak to him anymore ... he only ever sent two letters that's all ... he doesn't really care ...(Karl: 34). My dad gave all our stuff to this man across the road like our swings and that ... (: 35). My dad said we had to give it (the dog) away" (: 36).

Karl's observation of his dad prior to this erosion embodies a view of him which seems to physically place him close to his father's behaviour. There is evidently a feeling of connectedness to his dad, which might be construed as empathy. There is a strong feeling that Karl had at some point almost put himself on the sofa with his dad. There is however no sign of compassion. What is it that prevents the growth of empathy or sympathy into a passion which would fortify and strengthen the connection and lead to a desire to relieve his dad's pain?

### **Compassion and pity**

The answer probably lies in an emotion that would naturally get in the way of compassion. Pity has been defined as lacking the oneness of deep feeling, mind and action which are present within compassion. Pity seems to exhibit a desire for separateness.

Karl saw his dad as suffering, but weak and inferior also. A close association or connection with him would bring no reward, and would seemingly bring suffering upon himself. Removing self or moving away from an object of pity can be seen as a form of self preservation but it does reveal an underlying lack of concern or interest in the sufferer. Fox refers to pity as a form of condescension, a "disguised gloating" (1990: 2). This seems a harsh definition, but when compassion is absent it seems likely that suffering is viewed as a state of inferiority and impoverishment and it should be shunned.

There would appear to be a separation of the individual from the suffering. The suffering is seen in isolation. Berlant talks of "scenes of vulnerability (which) produce a desire to withhold compassionate attachment, to be irritated by the source of suffering in some way" (2004: 9). Attachment is withheld, and suffering is viewed dispassionately. Karl clearly saw the suffering of his father, but was not constrained to alleviate it. He withdrew emotionally, and later was able to outwardly remove all emotional ties to his father and voice only disparaging views of him. If it was pity that Karl felt, it was only a few steps away from the emotions of irritation, anger and ultimately indifference.

Compassion on the other hand is resilient, immovable and self sustaining. At this point, the question arises which asks why is it that pity appears to replace compassion in certain circumstances. The ethical component of compassion seems to be at the heart of this question. The connections that are made between the vision of what is seen as 'the overall good' and a personal commitment to respond seem to be a critical feature of compassionate feeling. Making decisions about how to respond to suffering depends



upon a personal view creatively and imaginatively constructed. Robinson (2008) writes that this view is based upon intrinsic beliefs and community relationships. These links he feels have received little attention from researchers.

“...there has been little attempt to relate virtues systematically to the affective domain, (for example, through an analysis of empathy) and still less to see how they relate to belief systems” (Robinson 2008: 9).

Emotions which emerge from what is seen as good or virtuous which in turn are in some way connected to beliefs will be discussed fully at the conclusion of this chapter.

### **Compassion and happiness**

There is a strong link between compassionate feelings accompanied by action and happy, sometimes joyous feelings voiced by the young people. Coral described how she had ‘told’ her mum that she should get away from her dad, because she could not bear to see her mum suffer anymore. When it became clear that her mum was going to follow Coral’s direction, Coral laughed out loud at the memory of that moment.

“Happy (small laugh) that we were finally going to get away” (Coral: 13).

Terry showed a more direct emotionally happy outcome at the time of the abuse towards his mother.

“She used to call me her favourite, ... her magic boy, because when she was sad I knew exactly what to do ... just smile and give her a hug and anything like that”

(Terry: 24).

His ability to exhibit a happy, cheerful response to his mother’s sadness was an isolated example of Terry’s ability to feel pleasurable emotions which were expressed only once in his story. He illustrates his compassionate yearnings for his mother’s safety and well

being consistently and constantly. Only once does he remember these experiences in terms other than painful. As he recollected his ability to smile and be a 'magic boy' in direct response to his mother's pain, he demonstrated that compassion can neutralise suffering or at least act as a buffer. It can overcome sorrow and the effects of pain in some measure. Affection and a positive display of cheerfulness can be unlocked from an inherently painful experience. An image is drawn of mother and son happily hugging and smiling together despite the pain of recent events. Robinson (2008) describes how suffering can be transcended. His feeling is that there needs to be a conceptualisation of how life ought to be, together with an understanding of what constitutes the suffering.

"The suffering of another enables us to be open to the real presence of the other and leads to the development of responsibility for the other. However, ... suffering is an inevitable and profound part of our lives and ... compassion and empathy are the only way of making sense of it" (Robinson 2008: 182).

Terry cannot help but want to take care of his mother.

"I just depend on making sure she's safe" (Terry: 25).

"I used to push him (dad) away and everything, but if I didn't do it and my mum really would get hurt ... I used to cry cos I thought I could have stopped that but I didn't" (Terry: 30)

"That's why I was scared about her (mum) meeting another man cos I don't want to see her like that again" (Terry: 24).

Terry's expressions of his feelings in relation to his sense of responsibility for his mother are deeply moving. His feeling voice is full of anguish and regret. However, there is also a clear message that he felt his efforts were not in vain. He was continuing to feel just the same, making sure his mum is safe, despite being told by his support worker that "I

shouldn't do that but I like doing it" (Terry: 25). Making sense of the pain around his mum and himself seems to demand a continuation of his compassionate overseeing of their situation even though the perpetrator is no longer in direct contact with his mother. In time it is probable that the need for this interdependency will decrease as the suffering becomes more distant and its memory becomes diffused. Terry's sense of responsibility will diminish in relation to his mother's suffering, but his capacity for compassionate responses will probably remain.

### **Compassion received**

Compassion is given and received. The young people's emotional response to compassion received is complex and seems to be dependant upon the evolving relationship between them and the giver. Those relationships which embraced the idea of support and care, particularly involving professionals such as teachers or workers for voluntary organisations, were described in very positive ways. There is a very strong element of appreciation and recognition of the part these workers played in solving problems and initiating changes which proved to be positive.

"I have had \_ to myself, ... she is someone I can trust really well. I've been seeing her for about ... four years now. It was really good" (Scott: 3).

"I think most of the support came from \_ and I think that really helped me because I was keeping a lot of stuff inside ... and now that it's all out and I've told \_ everything ... I can kind of move on" (Coral: 19).

"I know there's other people out there that can help ..." (Coral: 19).

"At first I felt really worried but then there was ...like really nice people there (in the refuge)" (Karl: 32).

"Think like he's (support worker) helped me a lot ... better" (Karl: 39).

"I've got a lot more confident because he said to me you shouldn't let anyone put you down and ... it has worked" (Rose: 47).

The adults who were able to alter the young people's lives in such radical ways demonstrated a willingness to listen and build trust. The help which was felt was reliable and could alleviate anxiety. It was also able to build confidence through sensitive encouragement and advice. Being 'nice' probably refers to an adult who demonstrates reliability and genuineness. Young people have an incisive perception and are probably able to discern any form of deception.

The value that is given to particular adult workers is high and humbly recognised. With the acceptance of the help given, the young people acknowledged that they were indeed in need of help. Each of the young people expressed different needs. These included a cry for help through self harming, a need to manage his anger better, a need to get horrible experiences out into the open, a need to stand up for himself, a need to be a teenager and a need to become more independent and confident. Solutions to meeting these needs were offered and accepted. What follows is dramatic and heart warming.

The young people clearly state that as recipients of compassionate interventions by caring professionals, they have had some of their critical needs met, their suffering has been lessened and their lives have become happier.

### **Hopefulness**

Suffering from abuse has been likened to torture. Analyses of the perpetration and resultant effects of abuse have drawn attention to the many similarities between victims of domestic abuse and torture victims. Torturers are inherently intent on eradicating every vestige of hope. Their game is to undermine through degradation, isolation, threats, displays of total power and the infliction of pain. Their ultimate purpose is to bring about despair, a belief that all is lost and that the only way out is to give in and surrender to the demands of the torturer. The victim possesses a sense of personal resignation with an abandoning of self worth and identity which leads to her psychological, emotional and mental bondage. The point is reached when the victim becomes a nonentity with an absolute loss of autonomy and personal agency. All control and power is now held by the perpetrator.

The disempowered victim would appear to be in a hopeless situation. Victims of domestic abuse are undermined just as victims of torture, through degradation, isolation, threats, never ending anxiety and displays of total power. Survivors talk of these experiences.

“I had lots of worries”.

“Not very happy ... worried, miserable ... angry”.

"I usually got shouted at or I got threatened".

"I had to see my mum getting hurt or something".

"Horrible (home)".

"Because I hated seeing her and hearing it (domestic violence)".

"She (mum) would always reassure me that it wasn't my fault but ..

I did still feel guilty".

"I was scared that he might come back".

"We had a huge argument (dad and me), a lot of crying and screaming in the middle of the street".

"My mum was being sick every time she went to the toilet".

"Crying nearly ... every single second of the day".

"It's about talking down to them ... my dad wanted to control me".

"I've always had abuse".

"I used to cry cos I thought I could have stopped that but I didn't".

"He said it was my fault that he was beating up my mum".

### **Hopefulness, affliction and pain**

The grimness of the young people's lives is indisputable. Peltomaki (2008) speaks of this kind of suffering as something much worse, as affliction. The definition which is used to describe 'affliction' is pain which scars all dimensions of a person's life. Affliction is an extreme condition which leaves its victims powerless and with no escape. It is stated that "Affliction permeates the soul and affects one's future direction, one's destiny and one's hope" (ibid: 223). It is extraordinary that hope can be silenced but hopefulness does

however remain in the voices of the young people. It is what Peltomaki (2008) describes as a 'clinging' hope. There is a feeling that there may be someone who might understand the pain or at least see the suffering, and possibly work to bring an end to it.

"When I was young, I used to think to myself this isn't going to be for ever cos as soon as I'm old enough I can leave and I always looked at that picture when I was little and the person that gave me that idea was my auntie" (Rose: 48).

Rose's auntie saw the pain and was able to ignite the 'clinging' hope into a picture which embodied hopefulness. The pain would end and Rose had it within her power to end it. Rose describes how she always kept the 'picture' in her mind which had been given to her by her auntie. Hopefulness had become a tangible thing, a lingering image which embodied her escape and her freedom from pain. Her affliction had not entirely prevented her from believing in the future and she was able to accept the truth of the 'picture'.

This vision which Rose held on to had the power to sustain her. As dreams do, so the 'picture' took her somewhere else beyond the present reality to a place where there were untold possibilities.

"You can do whatever you want and I've always looked at that picture" (Rose: 48).

It is remarkable that the young people demonstrate hopefulness in the face of torturous experiences which are inflicted upon them by those who should be caring for them. The loss of this care and the security of family relationships associated with it appear to create an emptiness and a silence which results from the isolation caused by unspeakable events.

Coral describes her life as being friendless with no opportunity to talk about her experiences until long after separation from the perpetrator. When she was asked if there was anyone that she could speak to other than her mum, she replied,

"Nobody else, nobody else at all" (Coral: 15)

"I didn't think I needed to speak to anyone else" (Coral: 15).

"I was keeping a lot of stuff inside and didn't really want to talk to anyone about it" (Coral: 19).

"I didn't really have a friend that I could talk to or anything..." (Coral: 19).

As a forced isolation takes hold of the young person's ability to communicate with others, Coral holds firmly to a hopefulness which surrounds her mother. There feels like a connection between an implicit trust which Coral holds for her mum and a thread of hopefulness.

"I knew that it was the right thing (leaving dad) and that if she didn't do it then she never would ...I knew this had to be the last time" (Coral: 16).

The trust in her mum's decision is almost complete, although she is still aware of her own and her mother's vulnerability.

"I didn't want to talk about it because I was scared I would make her upset and I was scared that it might make her want to take him back again" (Coral: 16).

Despite the isolation and her fear and vulnerability, Coral remained open to experiences and people who would challenge her built up perceptions of her life.



"He made me see things differently ... I didn't want to grow up and marry or anything because all men are the same, but then, now I've met \_ I know there's other people out there that can help and they're not there to ruin our life ..."

(RC: 19).

Her hopeful vision had allowed the penetration and acceptance of new experiences which might have been discounted and rejected if they had been based solely upon what was seen as a totally bleak and uncompromising past. Hopefulness is sometimes likened to a penetration of light in otherwise dark circumstances. The darkness and bleakness of life experiences which are predominantly characterised by affliction and suffering can be infused by the light of hopefulness. Israel (1995) describes this process as a relief from vile experience.

"Hope is like the first rays of sunshine breaking through the darkness of a lengthy night and lighting up the previously hidden landscape to reveal its naked beauty" (1995: 55).

### **Hopefulness and light**

The hidden landscape is hopefulness which is a view of what is being lived that magnifies the wonders of that life and also directs the gaze away from those things which cause despair and despondency. The view may be just a 'spark' but it is enough Israel (1995) affirms to dispel the darkness.

Terry describes the process of light coming into his life. His sister's boyfriend would talk to him and his younger brother.

"And he's been talking to us every time we was upset or he's there and he takes us to a different room or something and sits down and talks to us. And tells us what it's like when it's better, and that's what we are looking forward to. He says everything is gone ... all the stress is gone ... so he makes us look forward to that and then we are not upset" (Terry: 29).

Hopefulness exists beyond the present in 'a different room'. It's there that an important truth for Terry is shared and accepted. The truth of 'when it's better' is a fundamental element of his hopefulness. This element of anticipation within hopefulness is examined by Israel (1995). Hope he describes as a primary emotion, which combines desire and expectation. He writes that hope remains the most intimate of inner feelings. It has been described in the most eloquent terms which are immediately persuasive and expressive.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast" (Pope: An Essay on Man).

"That invisible fecundity, that spring of living water that makes humanity capable of flowering, is hope" (Jessey 1978: 9).

Obedience to this hope, of not 'if it's better' but instead 'when it's better', enables the person "to live to survive, to endure and to stand up to life" (Peltomaki 2008: 231).

Despair has not been allowed to overcome Terry completely. Instead, he and his brother are able to look forward to a brighter future, free of 'everything' in the past which has upset them and afflicted them. Robinson describes this aspect of hopefulness as "empowerment for change" (2008: 144), and it is clear that Terry sees what has happened as a change from a state of being upset in the present to being made to look forward to an

end of suffering. The empowerment is given through an empathic recognition of the needed remedy. This is given as Terry is told what it's like when things are better. The result is changes in the present, a change in attitude, a change in his thinking and a change in his emotional state. Not only can Terry see the future as being better than the past, but the present is also better. Robinson writes, "The primal ground of hope lies not in the future but in the present and above all in an other" (2008: 144).

### **Hopefulness and spirituality**

Swinton (2001) defines this form of emotionality in terms of spirituality; that spirituality is the process and development of an appreciation and awareness of the other, including the self..

Terry clearly identifies the author of the remedy as being the creator of the changes which take place. Terry's sister's boyfriend was able to 'model' the changes for Terry and his brother, and inspire hopeful feelings. He had his own knowledge of affliction and suffering and had obtained his own hopeful outlook and expectations. He could offer Terry a view of recovery and self worth which would encourage him and help him to overcome his fear.

Karl's description of the family's escape to a refuge appears at first to be a matter of fact record of what happened.

"...someone in my family helped find a refuge, and there was one in \_ and one somewhere else but we like never knew anything about \_ so we thought it

would be nice to come to \_" (Karl: 36).

Karl is clearly expressing a hopefulness around the choice of where they would ultimately live, and exhibits an evident faith in the outcome of the choice. Robinson writes that this form of hope is future orientated (2008: 144). Karl uses the pronoun 'we' to determine how the whole family felt when the decision was made. The hopefulness felt towards the future appears to be dependent upon the strength of critical family relationships. 'We' in this instance indicates Karl's implicit trust and faith in his family's decision as well as a willingness to embrace the outcome despite being "a bit scared" (Karl: 37). A hopefulness ascribed to the future is not merely a blind optimism (Robinson 2008: 144)), nor is it a mindless vision of the future seen through rose coloured spectacles (Mananzan et al. 1996). Degenaar writes that the forward thinking and feeling which constitutes hopefulness may be seen as "a creative expectation" (1991: 4).

Robinson (2008) discusses this creative or imaginative element of hopefulness, describing the ensuing consequence as possessing multiple pathways. A range of possibilities may be envisaged and considered. Through collaboration with others and by working through various possibilities, "a feeling that things can be done" (ibid: 146) emerges, and this can further fuel hopefulness. As Karl was hopeful at the time the choice of his future home was made, he remained constant to the idea that despite fears and worries, the pathway taken would be the right choice and lead to further pathways and choices, and 'things' could and would be done.

"We came down to the refuge and then moved in there for seven and a half

months ... and then we got a temporary house just down the road from where I live now ... and then ... got another one like permanent, where we are now"

(Karl: 32)

"I've still got one friend who lives in \_ and he was from the refuge ..." (Karl: 38).

"My mum's got a new boyfriend .. I mean husband now ... that's good ... so we go places and that ... we went to a Greek restaurant on ... last week" (Karl: 39).

Karl announces the choices and pathways which have been 'good', and despite the huge feelings of loss which he undoubtedly felt, was able to imagine a future realistically drawn and hopefully expected. Karl concluded with his view of his family.

"I think like it's improved a lot" (Karl: 40).

Karl's family had changed, through the changes that had been instigated by the family's choices. These changes within the family were evidence of the rightfulness of the pathways chosen. There remained within Karl remnants or vestiges of hopefulness, or perhaps hopefulness has regenerated itself into stronger and more resilient hopefulness. Ackermann writes, "Our actions again reinforce our ability to hope" (1996: 144).

### **Hopefulness and waiting**

The expectancy which is part of the future orientation of hopefulness requires additional emotional expenditure. Waiting is companion to expectancy. "Hope is also learning to wait" (ibid: 144). Waiting requires patience and endurance.

It is an interesting phenomenon that the young people often refer to specific times. It appears to be a human characteristic that waiting may result in a propensity to clock watch. How long we have to wait is a fact that our minds seem to want to consider and record.

"We came down to the refuge and then moved in there for seven and a half months" (Karl).

"Then we was living in a caravan park for two months" Rose).

"We was put in a temporary house for I think it was six months" Rose).

"He (dad) changed like for two days and then he was back to his normal self" (Coral).

"It was nearly two years ago and he (dad) haven't given it (divorce) to her (mum). (Terry).

As the young people patiently endured the wretched circumstances of their lives there is no doubt that their challenges were tightly associated with the necessity of banishing those things which sought to deprive them of hope (Ackermann 1996).

Coral is haunted by the possibility of her mother's return to her father. Terry is terrified that his mother might become involved with another abusive partner. Those things which seem to be designed to attack hopefulness remain and create oppositional forces which have to be 'wrestled' with (Ackermann 1996).

## **Hopefulness and justice**

The wrestle which is displayed by the young people can be seen by them firmly and fiercely holding on to and believing in justice. The relationship between hopefulness and justice is complex and requires some thought. Lambourne (2004) describes justice as having different kinds and combinations. In the context of suffering, 'restitutive' justice would appear to be relevant, as the young people and their mothers have suffered great losses and pain.

“ She’s (mum) changed cos she’s split up with him (dad). She thought ...

he just wanted to control me, and I was like, ... ‘Well done’”.

“My dad wanted to control me. I wouldn’t give it to him cos he’s not winning.

And he’s realised now that if he talks down to me, I’ll talk down to him” (Terry)

Terry is describing feelings which are based upon what he sees as wrongs being put right, justice in action. Whereas before, his dad caused immeasurable suffering, his mum has now recognised what is required to bring about a kind of restitution. It feels to Terry that there is a form of recompense in his mum’s deeper understanding of her husband’s abuse of her. This coupled with her freedom and independence of him formed a ‘restitutive’ justice. Similarly, he had carved out for himself a kind of satisfaction in being able to stand up to the father who had abused him daily. It would not be illogical to say that these actions were born of a desire to create justice, which would have been possible only with the possession of hopefulness which sustains and empowers.

Hopefulness can be seen to aid self determination and allow transformation (King 1996). Terry clearly expresses a new identity and a new freedom. Wrestling against injustice and those feelings which seem to naturally attend it such as despair and despondency is one form of struggle which is fuelled by hopefulness. The struggles against apathy and shame can only be fought in the present which has not been allowed to become totally darkened.

"She said to me, she said go on, you can go into care, it was like she didn't care what happened to me ...and my mum said I can't be dealing with you ... I didn't really know what to do. I had a five year old little sister as well" (Rose: 44).

Rose's struggle to remain fixed in her love for her mum despite apparent total rejection results in her subsequent actions to ensure her family stay together. Her mum remains the central figure.

"I hated them (Social Services). I hated them. I thought you're not taking me away from my family, specially my mum".

Rose lied to the Social Workers because she believed it would allow her to stay with her mother. Her hope somehow lay in overcoming the shame and hurt she felt by enabling her family to be together, highlighting the critical importance of her mum and herself being able to mend their relationship.

Rose describes the situation a little later on as unchanged emotionally. Her relationship with her mum does not appear to have become closer; there is no evidence to support the mending of their bond.



"It was really depressing because mum was so depressed. She just felt really alone and ... she just wanted to drink all the time ... I was going through a stage of self harming".

Her mum's aloneness even when her daughters were with her indicates a disinterest in her children which mirrored her earlier emotional abandonment of them. A lack of concern and an apathetic desensitization to the needs of her children were the result of the years of abuse.

Despite her mother's apparent indifference, Rose struggled against despondency and accepted help when it came her way. Her view was that she had 'found' herself, that she was able to be herself because she had been told, "It's ok to be myself, it's ok to be a teenager" Rose: 46). She had been convinced and had readily embraced her identity as it had been revealed to her. Her hopefulness had lain in knowing that she was ok. The simplicity of the message belies its power. The message was received by Rose's struggling identity, a spark of hope which remained was ignited and she gained a new found hopefulness.

"I feel it's ok for me to do my own thing now and my mum hasn't got to be there all the time" (Rose: 48).

Rose's story supports Ackermann when she writes, "Somewhere in the deepest recesses of the human spirit there lurks the gift, the power of hope, in the face of the most wretched circumstances" (1996: 143).

Hopefulness has been linked to life itself. "To lose hope is to lose life" (Ackermann 1996: 144). The empowerment and autonomy which comes through hopefulness can be seen in the stories of the young people. Each one had been disempowered and nullified by violence. "The taproot of violence is surely *silence*, of being vetoed and nullified and cancelled so that we have no say in the future of the community or of our own lives" (Brueggemann 2000: 7). However, their stories capture the changes which represent the influence of hope.

Hope sees the suffering but it believes in the future (Peltomaki 2008). "Obeying hope" allows the possibility of survival (ibid: 231).

"I want to talk about it (the abuse) and hopefully let it help other people ... I feel it's always going to be there but I can kind of move on ... and try and put it in the past" (Coral: 19).

### **Peacefulness**

The word 'shalom' is a Jewish greeting or farewell, of welcoming and leaving peace behind. It encompasses well being, human flourishing and fulfilment (Dorr 1990). Robinson (2008) defines it as possessing a sense of wholeness alongside a sense of justice. Fox (1991) describes the fusion of peace and justice as the creative capacity of compassion. The isolation of the emotion of peacefulness appears to be inherently problematic, as there appears to be a tendency to describe it in terms of its relationship with other emotions. The relationships are explained in such a way as to rely on peacefulness as being a constituent of another more 'basic' emotion, or as being

recognised only when it is joined with another. Its effects therefore would seem to be complex and entangled, and feelings associated with it difficult to isolate and define.

However, in the stories of the young people, it seems evident on nearly every page.

The evidence of a kind of calmness and tranquillity in the face of disturbing, often violent experiences is clearly seen as the young people react in forgiving, often reconciliatory ways.

"There was a time when my friend was being nasty to me and I helped him out. And there was a time when a girl was all upset and I helped her out and after all she was mean to me and she said, 'Why are you being so kind?' and I said because you're my friend. So she stopped being mean" (Scott: 8).

Scott sees the situation not in terms of retribution, where justice might have been better served if he had sought vengeful, equally mean responses to those young people who were being 'mean' to him. Instead he reacted in a creative way, transforming the emotional dynamics of the relationships, and causing the meanness to stop. The peacemaker, the pacifist is revealed as Scott determines future events through the emergence of his forgiving acceptance of the situation. He restores a sense of peace to his circumstances and adds, "So that was really good". The goodness of what he sees he has done is indicative of an ethical stand which he has made which has found expression in his actions which are based on a determination to relieve suffering. His protest was a pacifist one. He resisted the impulse to seek revenge; he struggled against what many would see as an understandable reaction and sought harmony.

### **Peacefulness and feeling safe**

Resistance, struggle and protest may only occur within a safe place (Grey 1995). She argues that the feelings of peacefulness which attend being in a safe place allow the individual to act upon those feelings of peace, and oppose repression and suffering. Resistance is a refusal to accept defeat born of an inner confidence which can only prevail where there is an overriding feeling of safety. Scott did possess the confidence to resist the pain of another probably because he had learnt from someone over a long period of time, 'four years' that it was possible to listen to another person's pain and not be overpowered by it and still maintain a closeness. The closeness he had felt and still felt with this teacher who was able to listen to him contributed to his belief in himself and what he could accomplish.

"I actually wanted to become in the form of some support worker with people, help people who have had experiences and stuff and use my experiences and ... basically knowledge and everything to help other people" (Scott: 3).

Scott did show compassion as we have already discovered. The compassion arose out of an inner peaceful assuredness and a desire for peace which had overcome any natural inclinations to retaliate or be confrontational. He exhibited the transforming power which is contained within a desire for reconciliation. Peacefulness here is a force which appears to allow closeness and reconciliation beyond expectations.

Boler (1999) expresses the idea that oppression can provide us with a highly developed capacity for feeling. The consequences of this can be inhibiting as it might logically

exclude us from any form of public life. Equally, it may encourage us into the service of others as nurturers and lead to subservient roles in society. Scott does appear to see himself in terms of the help he is able to provide, and is concerned that if he had not experienced suffering, he would not be able to care for others. The creative conflict resolution which Boler (1999) describes is evident in Scott's story. As he dreams and envisions a transformed future, he is able to keep his dreams alive (Grey 1996).

Coral describes how her dreams are kept alive in the safe place she goes to. She listens to Eminem, and reflects on the way he is close to his daughter, just as she would want her own dad to be with her.

".. I would just sit in my room and just listen to Eminem because he's so close to his daughter and he writes about her and sings about her and I used to wish that dad would just be like that with me .." (Coral: 15).

Robinson (2008) defines and echoes this image of quiet acceptance as serenity. A derivative of peacefulness, serenity implies an acceptance of reality. This is embodied in the self and in the situation. Coral is clearly conversant with the reality of her situation. She is also fully aware of her part, and how her identity as a father's daughter remains unfulfilled. She is able to acknowledge her feelings of disappointment, but they appear to be softened as she considers the love shown by Eminem to his daughter. Her acceptance of her own loss allows her to be reconciled to herself, to recognise cheerfully the better circumstances of others and provide her with an opportunity to be forgiving.

### **Forgiveness and peacefulness**

Forgiveness would seem to act as a prerequisite to peacefulness (Mananzan et al. 1996). Hyun Kyung (1996) describes the interplay of these emotions as she writes about a woman enslaved and sexually abused. "From Soo-Beck we learn her legacy of survival, forgiveness, and acceptance. Her survival was her liberation. Her forgiveness was her best revenge, and her acceptance was her best resistance" (ibid: 137). The quiet acceptance which Robinson (2008) defines as serenity seems to depend upon an ability to forgive.

"It wasn't my fault, it wasn't my mum's fault ... it was just the drink cos like, I have seen other people get violent on drink" (Rose: 45).

"When my mum had all that time to have ... to have all the time she wants with me but she never took it ... she pushed me out ... so I'm not trying to get back at her or nothing ..." (Rose: 47).

Rose talks about how she tries not to make her mum feel guilty about the past. This involves the avoidance of those things which she sees as upsetting for her mum. Talking to her mum about her suicidal thoughts when she was at her lowest point, was not something she could consider then and even years later. Rose's acceptance that her mum did put her and her sister through 'quite a bit' and her apportioning no blame has led to a feeling of forgiveness and peaceful agreement with her mum. Their relationship is close now, "it did get really close and it still is close .... me and my mum we talk more and we just bond more ..." (Rose: 47). The bonding is like a flowering of their relationship into

an image of contentment, in which each has accepted new responsibilities and is happy to pursue and fulfil them without feeling any regret or guilt towards the other.

"It was time for mum to be the mum and me to be the teenager ... I have been able to be myself" (Rose: 47).

This transformation is poetically described by Hyun Kyung who likens it to a kind of exorcism from the ghosts of rage, fear and helplessness, to bring "our full womanhood to bloom like a lotus flower of wisdom from a mud of suffering" (1996: 133). Rose's story reflects what King (1996) describes as the ability to calm down quarrels. The calmness of the present conceals Rose's struggles for self determination.

She had gained strength and peace knowing that the suffering "isn't going to be for ever" (Rose: 48). But she had followed that course "because I am getting my own life ... going out more with my friends ... my confidence was like building all the time" (Rose: 47). The tremendous effort expended by Rose displays "a mission of peace with justice which will result in a beautiful world, a new creation, no longer hostile" (Oduyoye 1996: 163). Significantly, the power to struggle for transformation seems to have come to her partly through the help of another. The support worker whom she saw as someone who had taught her an important truth provided her with crucial direction.

"I've got more confident because he said to me you shouldn't let anyone put you down and ... and it has worked. It has really worked. If anyone puts me down I just say I don't care ... I don't care what anyone else thinks ... I've become myself" (Rose: 47).

Rose's avoidance of confrontation and her willingness to shrug off the put downs do not indicate a silent acceptance of abuse born of fear. Her position does not reflect acceptance due to disempowerment. On the contrary, Rose is clearly empowered as she expresses the strength and sustenance that she feels as she has gained a new freedom and identity (King 1996).

### **Peacefulness and reconciliation**

The interconnectedness of Rose's experiences with others is a powerful thread which appears to twist her in the direction of accepting a mutual interdependence which means that she still feels a reliance, dependence and responsibilities associated with others (Oakley & Jenkins 1996). Despite a growing sense of personal identity and autonomy, Rose continues to remain close to the members of her family. In a story filled with suffering of the acutest kind, Rose's survival was caught up in the survival of her mum and sister.

"In societies in which people live closely together in mutual dependence ... life is precarious and people depend on each other for survival. Within some of these societies, anger seldom arises and aggression is rare" (Oakley & Jenkins 1996: 299).

Each individual received help and support almost simultaneously, and Rose's anger dissipated as they learnt to survive together.

"... then she (mum) got help from \_, and my sister was going to \_ ... like a counselling session, ... and my mum said to \_ about seeing me ..." (Rose: 46).



As Rose connects with her family and with the Support Worker, any anger she felt evaporates and the peace born of reconciliation prevails. She sees her treatment of her sister as 'really nasty', and tries to reconnect with her. Her wish to re-establish a non aggressive relationship with her sister does occur.

"I'm trying to make up for it now .. cos like I try to be there for her. I'm really nice to her now and I don't very often fight with her, but me and her used to fight a lot ..." (Rose: 46).

A relatively peaceful connection had been created by Rose, and with it an understanding of the reasons for her aggression previously. These reasons had been dealt with.

"..maybe it was because she was the only person I could take something out on, because I was always stuck at home with her and because I was so young" (Rose: 46).

It is likely that Rose's acknowledgment and understanding of her need to 'take something out' on someone led to her present position of rejecting the aggressive, hurtful behaviour of her past, and wanting to eradicate the fights. She had called a truce, acknowledging contritely that she needed to make the changes. She had been able to voice her anxieties. She had talked about her life. This process had liberated her desire for peace, and peacefulness had entered her most intimate relationships.

### **Peacefulness and play**

The human need for attachment is crucial and inescapable (Bellous 2008). The recovery from loss or trauma in a healthy way requires "true companions" (ibid: 197), based on a social interaction which demonstrates mutual respect and caring (Goleman 2006: 84).

The peaceful consequences of these interactions can be felt as Coral played with her brothers.

"I tried to play a game with them or something so that they couldn't hear anything" (Coral: 12).

Karl also speaks of playing with other children when he was in the refuge, which distracted from worrying thoughts.

"I started playing with the other children that was there ... just ignored it (feeling scared)" (Karl: 37).

The playing with others distracted thoughts and feelings about what was going on, and created a kind of calm which was a way of dealing with the situation. The games were in stark contrast to the violence in the room downstairs or in the home that had been left behind. Coral and Karl had turned to playing to combat the injuries, the suffering and the aggression.

The emotional effect of witnessing violent events and living so close to violent events leads to feeling scared, having intrusive thoughts and experiencing other symptoms of distress (Oakley & Jenkins 1996). Distractions can be easily created by play but there

needs to be a significant mental and emotional effort made if the distraction is to be effective. There would need to be a whole hearted commitment to the play activity, particularly if the situation required the involvement of others. It is remarkable that the young people who engaged in these activities were able to overcome their own feelings of fear and anxiety to such an extent that they were able to control them and convey quite different emotions to others. The peacefulness which is created by young people as they pursue playful, recreational activities is remarkable because it is formed at a time when their lives are stained by violence.

"I did like writing stories ... my main thing was writing and reading ... it kind of comforted me and it kind of released me ..." Rose: 43).

"Whenever I got angry or something or upset at something I started to draw ... and lately I've been doing that quite a lot" (Scott: 7).

The young people had discovered activities that were calming and 'releasing'.

Boler (1999) discusses the need to express feelings appropriately. Both Rose and Scott were immersed in emotional struggles of the acutest kind. Angry and upset, emotionally aroused by indescribable abuse, they found a means of exploration and a creative way of self expression which was appropriate and effective. The discovery of these ways seems to have been personal and remained private and in some measure secretive. Rose wanted to disclaim the real meaning of her stories.

"..you putting the pen to paper and no-one had to know what was happening to you but you could write ... that's the sort of things that I used to write about ... children getting hurt ... parents getting hurt but they didn't need, the teacher

didn't need to know what was happening at home" (Rose: 43).

It appears that in order for the means of expression to work, it has to remain deeply personal and retain an idiosyncrasy which intrinsically enables it nullify unwanted feelings.

### **Peacefulness and gratitude**

The journey from abuse and suffering to safety and peace is described by Gottlieb (2003) as one of gratitude and acceptance. Gaining or losing our hold on gratitude, peacefulness, acceptance and compassion is dependent on whether or not we feel at one with ourselves (ibid: 12). Coral describes her feelings now that her family has got away from the abuse.

"... we might not have much stuff as what everyone else does and things but I'm happy like with what we do have, cos we started with nothing" (Coral: 11).

She expresses gratitude for what they have achieved. There is a feeling of satisfaction and acceptance of a situation which may not compare favourably with that of other people, but which is seen as enough. Coral is thankful because the family has moved from having 'nothing'. Apparently she is talking about material 'things', and yet there is a sense of other gains which are probably emotional. Happiness is mentioned here. Coral has "worked on the human tendency to be satisfied", and feels gratitude, contentment and an accompanying sense of peace (Gottlieb 2003: 19).

"We've got a house now ... it feels just like a home again" (Coral: 11).

Analysis: views through a chink in the wall: voice relational analysis and 'feeling' voices

Her home feels safe and provides an emotional solution to the suffering of the past. The homeliness of her life allows her to be content.

### **Peacefulness and resistance to evil**

Gottlieb defines the finding of peace as being dependent upon actively resisting that which is known to be evil or destructively ignorant (2003: 13). There can be little doubt that each of the young people have resisted and struggled against the evil of abuse. Terry describes this struggle most graphically.

"My mum tried to make it so she could call the shots and the solicitor said you can't do that. And I went, 'Why can't she do it?' cos then she's the one losing out and he's (dad) getting away with everything ..." (Terry: 28).

Terry challenges the possibility of the continuation of abuse. The unfairness and the injustice are not tolerated by him.

"That's my dad wanted to control me. I wouldn't give it to him cos he's not winning. I don't care if I get told off or anything as long as he's not winning ..." (Terry: 28).

The struggle is a kind of combat where there are winners and losers. For Terry there can be no chance of his dad 'winning'. For his own peace of mind, he has to fight this battle, and not allow anything to deter him from 'standing up' to his dad.

"I didn't really have any respect for him anymore. I did have a little bit but I don't have any respect for him anymore" (Terry: 31).

The personal connection with his dad has been severed. He did this because he recognised that his dad had continued to be abusive towards his sister as well as his mum. This abuse Terry found very disturbing.

"This guy goes 'how many kids have you got?' and he (dad) goes three sons and I went 'you've got a daughter too, and he goes 'no I aint'. You've got a daughter And her name's \_ aint it? That really hurt me. He pretended he didn't know her but thought it was a joke but it wasn't funny. He used to always do stuff like that ...don't do it about your own family" (Terry: 31).

The connections are made to the past, and a recognition that what is happening cannot be accepted and must be resisted and overturned. There is a feeling that through Terry's courageous opposition to what he feels is unjust and unacceptable, he will ultimately acquire an inner peacefulness due to his having opposed injustice and abuse. Dorr (1990) describes this endeavour as possessing a keen sense of suffering which is unjustly inflicted. He adds that integrity and openness are evidence of a desire to make peace with others, and also a predisposition to challenge without resorting to violence.

"If I stand up for myself, he'll (dad) go, 'What are you doing?' I go 'Standing up for myself' (Terry: 28).

" ... he (dad) expects just us to sit down and listen. I won't" (Terry: 28).

A refusal to accept circumstances and act in a way which decries what is happening indicates that Terry possesses the courage to question the rightness of his dad's behaviour. He seems to be measuring it with a moral 'yardstick' of his own making. He is able to assert his opinions by 'standing up for himself' which satisfies his yearning for

justice. Peacefulness comes after the suffering is vanquished, and the person's dignity, self respect and autonomy are enhanced (Robinson 2008).

Finally, there are examples of when the young people recognised the inappropriate occasions when it would have been wrong to resist the oppression.

"I wanted to help (mum) but then if I did it would make things worse" (Coral: 13).

"...I felt I could (do something about the violence) but there was something holding me back like ... fear or something" (Scott: 5).

Unsure as to the real reasons for his unwillingness to intervene in what was happening, although it could have been fear, Scott still felt the urge to help as did Coral. However, they both addressed the root cause of the problem and recognised that there were no benefits to getting involved in the violence at that time (Mananzan et al. 1996). The time for resistance was yet to come. The avoidance of violence reflects an embryonic desire to maintain a non-aggressive stance. The seeds of non-violent protest may be laid at this point, as the young people remain constant to the feeling that their violent responses to violence and abuse would not have a desirable outcome.

As the conclusion of the analysis of the emotionality of the young people's stories has come, I am reminded of Burstow's assessment of a researcher's vision as being 'limited' and regrets associated with possible misrepresentation or insensitivity (1992 : xviii). At the start of my search, I knew that I would most probably need to be corrected. However, those who have been subordinated and silenced in the past, do now possess an "explicit

Analysis: views through a chink in the wall: voice relational analysis and 'feeling' voices

discourse of emotions (which) will lead us to develop a meta-discourse about the significance of different emotional expressions ..." (Boler 2000: 82).

### **Concluding – depths of emotionality**

The emotional expressions of the young people have been analysed in terms of specific emotions which I have described as disempowering or empowering, and their voices as being suffering or healing. Their emotional journey through their suffering has been directed at six specific emotions. However, the analysis has revealed many other emotions, entangled and juxtaposed within the stories. However, I hope that the reader will have gained an insight into the journeys through suffering where, for example, compassion exists alongside aggression, where hopefulness may reside within fearfulness and where peacefulness might be found beside bitterness. The complexity of individual's lives and the depths of emotionality have become clear.



### **Competency in coping**

This part of the description of the analytical process details the third layer of analysis, and outlines the interpretative insights drawn in relation to the research question which asked how the young people coped with their experiences of domestic violence.

#### **Layer three - Coping**

The analysis turns towards the young people's management of the abuse in their lives and focuses on their stories of coping, and again, crosses over from one story to another.

Patterns emerge which highlight difference and confluence.

To cope is "to deal with something effectively" (Penguin English Dictionary 2002). The relatively subjective nature of effectiveness makes an analysis of coping complex and at times seemingly contradictory. Coping may indicate an ability to manage, or it may mean just 'getting by'. It may be seen as surviving which implies a kind of battle or struggle. In contrast, it may be defined as the capacity to hold one's own and to remain independent of outside forces. These examples of coping may exist in one person's life and may vary according to their effectiveness or competence.

As the analysis of coping strategies unfolded, there needed to be an awareness of the complexities inherent in a study such as this. An overall view of coping might assist in the analysis of the young people's stories and so it is defined here as firstly, "an attempt to manage or deal with thoughts, feelings and bodily reactions under conditions of stress"

(Murgatroyd & Woolfe 1982: 22), and secondly “changing a situation which is stressful” (ibid: 22). Whether or not the attempts and changes are successful is not an intrinsic part of coping. Coping competency does however point to the degree of change or management achieved, and is dependant upon the individual’s biography, make-up and relationships (ibid: 25).

The competence with which children and young people cope with adversity and emotional trauma varies (Campion 1992). Some cope alright it would seem. While others who have been exposed to violence and adversity display an impairment of emotional growth and stability. It is therefore necessary to examine the young people’s ways of coping within the context of the abuse and then to focus on the aftermath, once the direct experiences of abuse have ended. This is founded on the idea that the abuse’s effects may be long lasting and require ways of coping long after the experiences of domestic violence have ceased. “Children might experience a wide range of behavioural, physical and psychological effects, which may be short and/or long term (Hester et al. 2007: 86).

It is also necessary at this point to emphasise “the range of complex strategies of coping and survival” which are developed by children in order to deal with their experiences of stress and adversity (ibid: 86). A strategy is a scheme adopted to cope, whilst a tactic is a person’s way of implementing the strategy (Murgatroyd & Woolfe 1982). Coping tactics may include drinking alcohol, prayer, cycling, talking to someone not involved or concentrating on work. Strategies may involve for example preventative action to

Analysis: views through a chink in the wall: competency in coping

prevent situations developing as stressful, or the creation of a 'buffer' between the person and the stressful environment, or the management of thoughts and feelings.

### **Pathways defined by Aviles, Anderson and Davila**

Aviles, Anderson & Davila (2006) define what they call 'pathways' which support children and young people in becoming competent in ways of coping, and these in some measure mirror the ideas of Grotberg (1997), Hague et al. (2002) and Sharp & Cowie (1998) who lay emphasis upon the encouragement of autonomy, the development and implementation of personal strengths and the presence of significant relationships. The purpose here is to look at the experiences of the young people and examine any evidence which supports the idea that the 'pathways' are described and/or implemented by the young people themselves.

There are five pathways described by Aviles et al. (2006) which can be used to structure and underpin the analysis of the young people's stories in the way described. These pathways to competence can be applied both negatively and positively in that they define competency in coping with adversity and what it is not. An assumption is therefore that the absence of any or all of the 'pathways' would indicate a low level of evidence to support competency in coping with adverse experiences. Again, the analysis begins with the young people's stories of the abuse and how they coped at the time but also encompasses later ways of coping.

### **First pathway – cooperative behaviour**

Firstly, cooperative and pro-social behaviour if encouraged may assist a young person in becoming competent in how they cope with adversity and suffering.

“... at times when people are being mean towards each other or mean towards me ... I’m polite back” (: 8).

“There was a time when my friend was being nasty to me and I helped him out” (: 8).

“We’ve done a group before and I was helping out with some of the people as well” (: 8).

“Church has also been helping me ... they pray and stuff ... talk to me about things. It’s like one big happy family” (: 9).

The social behaviour described is based upon a desire for closeness to others which overrides unkindness and experiences of abuse. This pathway to coping is established through a refusal to adopt an anti-social stance, and a commitment to a view of other people which embraces the idea of interdependency. It is of particular interest that Scott established the idea of church as being like a ‘family’ when his own had been fraught with suffering and unhappiness. The potential for a family to be happy had never been completely discarded by him. The modification of Scott’s understanding of social behaviour from the time that he abused his mother, thinking that it was ‘right’, to the time of the interview had been dramatic. He consciously had made some changes because of a realisation that something about him was ‘silly’. His thinking about himself in relation to other people became a preoccupation which demanded a more intelligent approach. The

silliness had to be swept away and replaced by attributes which he proudly noted were impressive to others.

“I decided I’m going to change now, because this is a bit silly and lately I’ve been getting really well ... \_’s impressed. All my support workers are very impressed” (: 9 ).

Making an impression socially and impressing others who are seen in a favourable light has led to a degree of coping which sees the past experiences of suffering as a strength. Scott was able to recognise that his experience could be utilised and applied to others’ experience for their benefit.

“I picked up a lot of skills what people do ...when I started to help my friends Cooperation with others using past experience as a conduit to assist and support him had led to an emotional plateau where problems can be overcome and where self esteem is recognised and elevated. This supports the assertion made by Spielberger, Borucki & Sarason that “an important factor in resistance to stress is a high level of self esteem” (1991: 289).

Underpinning Scott’s actions are his attitudes and his thinking which are founded on a realisation that he has to change. An inner awakening to the wrongfulness of what he had become and his desire to be worthy of others’ respect had set him on the ‘pathway’ to pro-social behaviour. His good feelings had reinforced the ‘pathway’.

“It felt really good”.

Scott continues to apply his thinking to reaching out to other people. He became aware of how he had coped using aggression, and how that way of coping had to change. Once he had acknowledged this, he describes the new 'pathway' and how he got there.

"... my mental strengths ... probably ... sometimes my sense of humour".

"I think it's my attitude, it's made a difference and also how I think and how I act now. Lately because I used to be as \_ would say a P.I.T.A., a pain in the -, (laughs) because I wasn't really nice towards my family, and school was really rubbish and I wasn't being nice towards my teachers, but lately my attitude has been changing, so ... it's been good" (: 8-9).

"When I started to help my friends – I thought I'm pretty good at this ..." (: 8).

Pro-social behaviour had brought a reward in the way he was feeling, and had been instrumental in establishing a way to a better means of coping.

### **Second pathway – peer friendships/adult relationships**

A second pathway suggested by Aviles et al. (2006) which if followed will develop coping competency is the initiation and maintenance of peer friendships and adult relationships.

"I did speak to one of my friends ...we kind of related really good and my mum and her mum were good friends ... it was just nice to know someone was there you know what I mean?" (: 44).

"...me and my mum we talk more and we just bond more ..." (: 47).

Rose demonstrates the closeness of specific relationships which are pivotal to her well being and ability to cope with adversity. Friends and 'good friends' can be associated

with what she describes as a 'bond' which is a kind of adhesion which maintains the relationship. The grip which bonds her to her mother and to her friend was a belief that they were 'there' for her. Being 'there' has connotations which imply a link which does not totally depend upon circumstances, but is more about a deeper, shared understanding. This may be the trigger which initiates and ultimately maintains the closeness of the relationship.

When Terry was asked if there was anything that had helped him he replied, "Yes me and my sister's boyfriend. He's been a lot of help cos he, he was in worse than me. And he's been talking to us every time we was upset or he's there..."

The initiation of Terry's friendship was brought about by his sister's boyfriend 'being there' in an emotional as well as a physical sense. The maintenance of this relationship was a natural consequence of a bond built on an empathic understanding and acceptance. At times of upset, an emotional power appears to have been unleashed within the relationship which calms and supports and which provides a degree of coping competence which had been explicitly absent before.

"He says everything is gone. All the stress is gone ... and then we are not upset"  
(: 29).

One relationship which Coral depended upon to the exclusion of all others while the abuse was going on was her relationship with her mother.

"Well, I was the one actually who told my mum that we had to get away and tried to make her do it".

“We have a very good relationship. We can talk about nearly everything”.

“Well she would always reassure me that it wasn’t my fault that he was doing it ...”.

“I thought I’d speaking to my mum, and I didn’t think I needed to speak to anyone else”.

The closeness between mother and daughter is very clear, and Coral devoted herself entirely to building the relationship. It was later, once they had left Coral’s dad, that the opportunity was provided for Coral to talk with a support worker.

“I think she (mum) thinks that I didn’t talk to her about everything ... I didn’t want to always to talk about it because I was scared I would make her upset”.

Coral’s sensitivity to her mum’s emotional needs indicates a very strong need to maintain the closeness of their relationship, and a continued affirmation of their interconnectedness. Nothing if she could help it would upset what they had. Coping through the maintenance of her closeness with her mum is evident, and this is what has sustained her through the suffering and afterwards. Later, she is able to initiate a particular friendship subsequent to their leaving to go into a refuge.

“... then I met my friend now, my best friend and I can talk to her about nearly anything ...I say to her all the time that if she needs to talk she can but ... I think she’s worried” (: 19-20).

The sensitivity she felt in relation to her mum is apparent in the building of a new relationship which appears to provide a means of coping with the long term effects of domestic violence. She believes that what has brought them together and maintained their



relationship has something to do with her past experiences in relation to her dad. Her friend has 'problems' with her dad, and Coral has shared her past because of a strongly held belief that experiences can 'help' others.

"I want to talk about and hopefully let it help other people" (: 19).

Each of these young people have valued and nurtured relationships with their peers and significant adults, and these have developed and been sustaining, revealing their significant contribution in assisting the young people in coping during and after their experiences of domestic violence.

### **Third pathway – management of aggression**

The third pathway described by Aviles et al. (2006) to increase competence in coping with suffering, abuse and exposure to violence is management of aggression and conflict. Management can mean being able to cope with difficulties, implying a form of control which is self induced. Managing aggressive feelings and conflict may be the result of applying what Cole et al. define as 'maladaptive strategies' (2004: 329). This implies that the management may not be entirely contributory to the person's well being, but may serve as the only means of coping seemingly available to the person at the time.

Aggressive feelings followed by actions have been analysed already, and have indicated the complexity of motivations surrounding aggressiveness. Expressions are clearly unique to the individual. Each young person described being hurt, followed by the ways each had found to hurt back (Ridgway 1973) or to internalise the hurt or to express the

hurt in some other way. All demonstrate ways of coping which vary according to the degree the emotion of aggressive anger is managed.

“He says, ‘You’re a donkey’. I go ‘You’re a donkey’. That’s what I do anyway” (: 29).

“...we had like a huge argument, a lot of crying and screaming in the middle of the street, so ...” (: 18).

“So I don’t speak to him anymore ... he doesn’t really care” (: 34).

“I don’t know why I’d just get really angry with her (sister) really quickly and I’d just shout at her” (: 46).

“... Because I wasn’t really nice towards my family ... and I wasn’t being nice towards my teachers ...” (: 9).

“I was going through a stage of self harming ... slitting my wrists and things like that, but I don’t ... it wasn’t properly or nothing” (: 46).

The expressions of aggressiveness are sometimes directed at the perpetrator, sometimes at an innocent person, or sometimes at the person her/himself; they can be echoes of the original hurt or they may redirect or stifle the hurt in some way, and respond with hurtful silence. The difficulty lies in knowing whether or not the control or management exists and if so where it begins.

It would seem to be true that those young people who chose silence rather than aggressive retaliation exhibit an essential management of aggression which does nothing to perpetuate conflict. How they came to this point of non aggressive action requires further analysis. Additionally, it is difficult to ascertain as to whether this way of coping

is in any way potentially less harmful to the emotional well being than overt acts of aggression as anger is expressed in for example the activity of boxing. As levels of emotionality reveal themselves it may be difficult to judge or determine what is fundamentally a higher level or more efficacious way of coping competency.

“He (brother) tries to fight ... I just push him over. I don’t see the point of hitting him ... what we’re doing now is ... it doesn’t hurt us ... it’s keeping us out of trouble and we’re playing but we’re doing like boxing and wrestling ... just get our energy away from fighting” (: 26).

This aspect of coping is openly acknowledged by Terry as being a measure which is designed to divert aggressiveness into an activity which he and his brother enjoy,

“He loves wrestling, I love boxing. We both want to be ... my brother wants to be a wrestler and I want to be a boxer when I’m older... so we do that” (: 26).

The ‘energy’ which fuels the conflict is adapted but also maintained. The emotion is not changed, but motivates a different course of action which is viewed as morally more acceptable. Aggression finds expression in a regulated way.

Scott’s story is perhaps the most significant in this area. The change which took place was situated in a cognitive sense and was a change in the way he thought of himself.

“I thought lots about it and I decided I’m going to change now” (: 9).

Prior to this he had been abusing his mother in particular and had been ‘harsh’ towards the other members of his family. The management of his aggression was facilitated by a situation which provided him with the means to ponder long and hard about what he was

doing and who he was. He then made a conscious effort to change. It is a truly remarkable turnaround which seems to have been triggered by his arrest.

It seems that Scott's experience supports the words of Hamlet. "There's nothing, either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (cited by Graham 2005: 57).

Scott exhibited few emotional difficulties at the time of the interview. His coping competency in relation to his suffering and exposure to violence showed no distinctive impairment except in relation to his learning. He admits that his life at school in relation to his work is problematic.

"A lot of teachers don't like me. My grades aren't too good ..." (: 9).

Scott was able to inhibit his aggression towards his family and his peers through cognitive means. His thinking and learning seems to be focused on this aspect of his life, because he sees his close relationships as the most important part of his life. The management of the emotions which had led to abuse against his family would need to be assigned significant effort and energy, and he sees his faith as part of this.

"I think I cope by staking in there basically, having faith and stuff because I am a Christian. So I pray and stuff like that about things" (: 9).

Effort directed away from aggression towards faith, prayer and family indicates a multi-dimensional future which has evolved out of Scott's creative use of learning (Park 1999: 19). It is interesting to note that Scott uses the word 'staking' when 'sticking' seems more appropriate. It may be a slip but it would be expected that a correction would follow if that was the case. Scott does not correct himself. To 'stake' sounds like to support and to strengthen. Scott copes through supporting and strengthening himself, and

this seems entirely feasible when he follows up this remark by adding his commitment to an inner faith and spirituality.

His use of a spiritual means of coping with angry feelings requires further interpretation and understanding. As a development of ideas around interrogation of the self and of personal experience, there seems to be a connection between faith and the idea of 'Being' (Kane 1997). "We feel we are at one with Being and are tapping into a source of vigour and connectedness. We may have the sense that we have not been abandoned." (ibid: 5). Faith can be the source of meaning and courage, the fulfilment of the wish to 'stake in there'. The connectedness between hope and faith can be demonstrated. "Hope comes of faith, for without faith, there is not hope ... the things we hope for lead us to faith" (Uchtdorf 2008: 23-4). Young people can, through faith "come to know, as inner experience, their unity with all other human beings. These are the sources of hope that may provide the courage and strength to shoulder full human responsibility" (Kane 1997: 8).

Using spirituality as a coping strategy or 'tactic' (Bone 2008: 270) to overcome aggressive feelings and actions does appear to connect with the young people's hopeful pronouncements which have been discussed in the section entitled 'humanising emotions'. Scott's simple pronouncement. "I'm going to change now" expresses a belief and a hopefulness that change is entirely possible as well as a concurrent self belief in his ability to accomplish it. It also expresses an intrinsic desire to change, which is urgently required 'now'. The need for change has been contemplated and decided upon without

reservation, and the decision appears to be based upon an optimism and hopefulness which is grounded in faith. Faith seems to be the key to making the decision to change, and cope with his past aggression and anger. Bone (2008) describes this process as a tactic as opposed to a strategy, which she proposes allows people to make sense of the situation they are in. "I propose spirituality as the ultimate 'tactic'... recovery and healing is possible when certain 'tactics' succeed and there is a sense again of wholeness, empowerment and joy" (ibid 2008: 270).

As young people find ways to manage their feelings of aggression and avert conflict, they demonstrate depths of understanding and spirituality which resolve into the development of a coping competency which clearly reflects their inner strengths and abilities.

#### **Fourth pathway – self mastery and self worth**

The development of self mastery and self worth is the next 'pathway' which leads to a greater competence in dealing with adversity. Seligman co-joins self mastery with optimism and asserts that the acquisition of these attributes will ensure the banishment of helplessness and depression. (2007: 8). This fourth pathway implies a personal struggle which is dependant upon an individual's own resources and this must partly be the case.

However, the stories of the young people appear to indicate that significant people in their lives were able to foster self mastery and self worth in the young people in sensitive and specific ways. Mastery implies self discipline and a strength directed towards control. Boler writes of this as "I am in control of me" (1999: 91) and goes on to

describe those educational 'emotional intelligence' programmes (Goleman 1995), which have been designed to facilitate emotional and social development. An underlying principle of all the programmes appears to be the apportioning of blame to those who have difficulty controlling themselves. Mastery of personal emotionality, thinking and behaviour is a universal virtue which the programme encourages. In the context of individual young people who possess the complex uniqueness of culture, family and experiential diversity and opportunities, perhaps mastery needs to be viewed differently.

"I was allowed to be me for once. I was allowed to be myself. I didn't have to worry about what was going to happen as I walked through the front door ...

I started going out with my friends more and they were showing me different things ... how to be ..." (: 47).

The kind of mastery exhibited here is wrapped up in a sense of being and of self. Rose was recognising her own needs along with sensing her own uniqueness. The comfortable feeling which she experienced as she began to recognise herself and know that she could accept herself and just be herself, expanded into a more general sense of well being and self expression.

"... it was kind of confidence from my friends plus – and my confidence was just building up all the time" (: 47).

Self recognition is overcoming those influences which disallow a young person from expressing their uniqueness. Giving permission to Rose was a significant step in her being able to gain mastery as an individual and gain a feeling of self worth.

"That's my dad wanted to control me. I wouldn't give it to him cos he's winning

I don't care if I get told off or anything as long as he's not winning and he's realised now that if he talks down to me, I'll talk down to him ... he's starting to talk with more respect to me" (: 28).

The echo of Terry's belief in his self worth is clearly expressed here. As he responds to the emotional abuse of his dad he displays a willingness to assert his personal rights. He shows this awareness through his recognition of himself and his needs, and the strength and courage to 'stand up for himself'.

"My dad didn't like anyone who stands up for himself. If I stand up for myself he'll go, 'What are you doing'? I go, 'Standing up for myself'" (: 28).

This way of coping had been passed on to him by his sister's boyfriend. The result of the experiences with him and later with his dad had been an increase in self mastery and self worth.

"Cos he's (sister's boyfriend) told me what to do and how to do it. Don't take the crap. Cos you'll be missing out. Everyone ... everyone in the world'll be thinking it, so you just can't take the crap" (: 29).

Terry had such confidence in the advice to act in the way he had chosen that he believed that the 'world' would not be able to stop him. As his confidence and feelings of self worth increased he was able to cope with his dad's emotionally abusive attitudes.

"I don't have any respect for him any more. I did have a little bit but I don't have respect for him anymore" (: 31).



The stories of the young people indicate the crucial element of the 'other' in building self mastery and worth. Abuse tears down self mastery and worth. It seems likely that the young people all needed support in the rebuilding of their self worth, because their stories reveal that the building blocks were put into place by members of their family, friends and professional support workers.

### **Fifth pathway – emotional regulation**

The final pathway advocated by Aviles et al. (2006) is defined as emotional regulation. Bringing order, direction and control to emotional experience within well defined rules would appear to be the requirement of regulation. Again, there does appear to be some form of connection to ideas associated with emotional intelligence (Goleman 1995). As Boler writes, "The equation of emotional intelligence with self control evidences the fact that the emotionally intelligent person is still the man of reason" (1999: 61). The acquisition of emotional skills provide the means "to express the right emotions in the right way" (ibid: 61).

The construct 'emotion regulation' has warranted a diversity of opinion and view as to its meaning and application. Cole, Martin & Dennis (2004) open the debate by questioning as to whether emotions are regulated or regulating. In their view, the essence of emotion regulation lies in changes which appear to result from an activated emotion which they define as 'emotion as regulating'; or changes in the activated emotion which they define as 'emotion as regulated'. The changes are the critical factors and are fundamental to either process.

“She (mum) used to call me her favourite ... not her favourite ... her magic boy, because when she was sad I knew exactly what to do ... just smile and give her a hug and anything like that” (: 24).

The ‘magic’ being talked about is Terry’s willingness and ability to change his mum’s emotional state from sadness to something quite different. This shows a change from a state of sadness into making an unhappy parent smile and demonstrates an emotion as regulated.

“Most of the time I would just sit in my room and just listen to Eminem because he’s so close to his daughter and he writes about her and sings about her and I used to just wish that dad would just be like that with me ...” (: 15).

It appears that the regulating of the emotions associated with the experiences of domestic abuse and violence evolves from experiences which appear to be far removed from them. Coral removed herself physically from the abuse and went to her room. There she would dream of a different kind of life with a different kind of dad. The link with her dad was central to her chosen way of coping. The emotions which were associated with her dad appear to be dulled by a choice to associate with a different kind of dad, one who cared and loved his daughter. This example appears to illustrate an emotion as regulating, as Coral found this experience soothing.

The debate around emotion regulation was succinctly covered in the journal of Child Development (2004) Volume 72 Number 2. It is a complex construct which many have used “as a tool to understand how emotions organise attention and activity and facilitate

strategic, persistent or powerful actions to overcome obstacles, solve problems and maintain well being” (Cole et al. 2004: 317). Here the emphasis is on emotions as motivators. Cole et al. (2004) emphasise the focus of regulation as change. Others state that it should be defined in terms of control. However, the view of this analysis is that the young people demonstrate an emotion-related self-regulation which encompasses a vast range of coping tactics which involve initiating, avoiding, inhibiting, maintaining, modulating and adapting emotions in order to achieve personal goals. These may be based on hedonistic values which if implemented result in self satisfaction and fulfilment (Park 1999).

At other times, the goals may reflect a preoccupation with the needs of others, which supports the importance of initiating and maintaining relationships. Larson (2002) does however highlight the central role of research in this area as a “need to focus on what factors account for the largest downturns in emotional level in early adolescence and what can be done to avert them, as well as look for what factors promote lasting upturns in baseline emotional state” (2002: 1162).

Spielberger et al. state, “Multilevel studies of emotions are urgently needed to deepen our insights about the emotional process” (1991: 61). The concept of many levels of emotionality has attracted my attention because of the apparent lack of relevant research. The “lasting upturns” in emotional state spoken of by Larson (2002) are of particular interest. A further exploration and examination of others’ efforts to achieve a multilevel analysis is needed.

Emotional Intelligence has possessed a popularity and a following which is based upon the general acceptance of “mastery of emotions through biological potential for logical choice” (Boler 1999: 75). This embraces the scientific view of a person as being “an organism whose brain contains pre-designed neural pathways to learn social behaviours” (ibid: 75). It is argued that an individual is able to acquire autonomy along with social and emotional skills. This is the ontological view contained within the dominant discourse of emotional intelligence.

However, the view here is different because ethically contained within a heuristic approach, there is an imposition to see things differently, to challenge what is accepted and to examine assumptions and acquired ways of seeing which may constrain creative thinking. For this reason, the term ‘Emotional Literacy’ seems to embody a closer identification with this search for meaning. Park (1999) describes how Emotional Literacy seeks to deepen young people’s self understanding through talking and relating to others so forming “links between inner worlds and their outer experience” (1999: 24).

This is supported by a programme for young people which was designed to promote emotional resilience which connects the emotional state of ‘calmness’ with self awareness. “Calm brings peace to the heart and clarity to the mind. Calm people have self awareness. They become more aware of themselves and their emotions” (Bellhouse et al. 2005: 4).

This view leads to the belief that the idiosyncratic coping with and management of

emotions is based upon internal and external laws which have evolved through experience. Introspective regulation is a response to a process of interrogation of experience which leads to an understanding of personal power (Holland, Blair & Sheldon 1995), and a recognition of knowledge and creativity.

“ I didn’t want to talk about it because I was scared I would make her (mum) upset and I was scared it might make her want to take him (dad) back” (: 16).

The knowledge that Coral had gained about her mother’s relationships with herself and her father had been grafted into her cognitive and emotional response. She knew that she held the power to recognise what needed to be done to avert disaster and her ‘scared’ feelings were cathartically instrumental in determining her actions.

This form of personal interrogation is empowering and self fulfilling. Coral does not appear to have suffered any long term emotional impairments due to her self imposed silence. She had spoken to no one about her suffering. Her recognition of the moment when she needed to talk appears to be sudden, because again she knew what the circumstances had to be like, and she immediately embraced the right opportunity.

“... didn’t really want to talk to anyone about it ... and now that it’s all out and I’ve told \_ everything ... I can move on ... and try and put it in the past” (: 19).

The emotional relief and release can be felt as Coral haltingly expressed how she had come to change her thinking and feeling and ultimately her actions, and this is echoed by

Rose when she talks about her management of emotions through various chosen activities.

“My school work was kind of a relief really ...my main thing was writing and reading ... it kind of comforted me and it kind of released me. You could write down what was happening to you but they wouldn't know that ...” (: 43).

Coping with a recognised inner suffering requires the application of a source of comfort. Relief is an expiation of pain which Rose knew that she could accomplish through reading and writing. Her self interrogation and creative expression of these emotions was dependant upon the sure knowledge that what she was doing was not understood by anyone. Just as self injuries are covered by sleeves, so Rose hid her pain in story writing and introspective reading.

The power of her personally found solution was felt by Rose. She was released and relieved, and it was accomplished by her alone. Emotional interrogation might lead to the recognition that there existed unhelpful feelings which would need to be replaced by more helpful ones (Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, Hibbert & Osborn 2007).

“I'd just get really angry with her (sister) ...I was really nasty to her ... now that I'm much older, I think it's really nasty the way I was towards her, but then I'm trying to make up for it now ...” (: 46).

The understanding of the need to modify her feelings towards her sister grew over time. Now that she was 'much older', Rose perceived her method of coping in the past as 'nasty'. The anger was in some way dissipated or redirected. She no longer needed to vent her aggressive feelings on her sister.

“She was the closest thing I could have a go at” (: 46).

“But it was quite nasty when I think about it now” (:46).

Rose could not act directly upon those who had perpetrated the violence and abuse in her life. She coped by demonstrating the need to express her distress when her sister was ‘close’ to her. The ‘closeness’ of their relationship is a significant factor in Rose’s coping actions. Now, she has an opportunity to right the wrong, because the closeness to her sister remains.

The concept of emotional regulation, whether it is defined as change or control, has been extended beyond the parameters of the individual to theories which are clearly more to do with how the individual is able to respond to the world. McCubbin, Thompson, Thompson & Fromer (1998) state that a sense of coherence is instrumental in a person’s ability to mobilise resources that seem appropriate in order to cope. This sense is firmly based on an ability to see the world as ordered and structured so that sense can be made of it. The cognitive aspects of coherence are evident. The world is comprehensible and meaningful, and leads to coping which “makes sense emotionally ... one wishes to cope” (McCubbin et al. 1998: 7). The wish to cope is crucial, and this is demonstrated by Coral when she reflects on how she sees her present in relation to the past

“Now that it’s all out and I’ve told \_ everything, I feel that it’s always going to be there but I can kind of move on ...” (: 19).

The desire to cope with suffering found expression in her willingness to talk to a support worker. It was through this effort that she was able to make sense of the past, and she

was able to think herself free of those parts which had emotionally and psychologically held her back and prevented her from moving forward in her life. This acknowledgment of her world and her story shows that Coral was able to see her experience in coherent, consistent and convincing ways. Park (1999) states that young people need opportunities to understand their own history, and make sense of any painful experiences. By 'opening up experiences' each person can 'fathom the mysteries' of their lives (1999: 28).

"At first like I didn't really want to say anything but then throughout it I got like more confident and realised that it wouldn't be said unless its like it needs to be said like to my parents" (: 39).

Karl had been very fearful that his dad would discover the family's whereabouts and had been very careful not to talk about the location of the refuge on the phone to his dad and this had been generalised into a pervading silence. "Children living with domestic violence may keep silent about what they know or have observed and will disclose this information only when they are given permission to do so" (Hester et al. 2004: 81). The fear had strangled him to the point that he 'didn't really want to say anything'. However, as he had been offered the opportunity to talk, he saw himself as growing in confidence and feeling safer.

Karl's had literally 'opened up' (Park 1999), and despite his secrecy acting as a coping strategy in the past, he was able to cope more effectively with his past suffering as he made sense of his feelings and his experiences as he broke his silence.

"When he (support worker) first walked in I was like, it's a man, and ... I don't



trust men after everything and, but he sat down and basically said, he basically showed me it was ok to talk ..." (: 46).

Rose demonstrates the truth of this statement. The support worker had offered Rose the most essential piece of knowledge that it was alright to speak of her experiences.

"They need to express what they feel – however unpleasant or difficult it may be to listen" (Park 1999: 28). Through talking there is an opportunity to find out, to compare experience, to explore at an emotional level. The richness of experience can be revealed and spiritual understanding may develop (ibid).

The complexity of the young people's coping competency has been exposed, particularly in relation to their 'emotional burdens' (Newman 2004: 23). There are multilevel interpretations which highlight the differing strategies and tactics employed by each of the young people as they coped with the domestic violence and abuse, their relationships, their loss of their homes and loved ones, their changes of circumstances, their feelings and all the consequences which accrued because of all of these factors.

Illustrations can be drawn from each of the stories of the young people. Karl applied an emotional buffer while in the refuge by involving himself in the activities organised by the support workers so that he could 'ignore' his scared feelings. His feelings of loss, of his home, his pets, his friends and his possessions was managed through his refusal to see his dad, his open acceptance that his dad did not care, and the initiation and maintenance of a new friendship begun in the refuge. These provided Karl with enough emotional support to cope with his dad's abusive behaviour and the effects of the abuse and

violence on the whole family. Additionally, Karl had had to change his school three times, had been forced to live in a refuge more than once for a few months and had lived in fear of his father finding out where they were living. He admitted that his relationship with his sister had been adversely affected by his dad's behaviour. It had somehow come between them, but he had learnt to accept that this was something he had no control over.

He was worried about his younger brother being coerced by his dad into contact, but had coped by keeping close to his brother and influencing him that way. He had talked about his experiences when he was given the opportunity and 'permission' to do so, and he had learnt about trust and had become more confident as he reflected on how he had managed the adversity which had come into his life. His positive view of his family in the present is significant. This is based on new experiences with his step-dad which have been 'fun'. He describes his family optimistically.

"I think like it's improved a lot" (: 40).

Feelings of powerlessness, upset, anxiety and helplessness have been washed away by waves of support, friendships and optimism. The hopefulness encapsulated by an optimistic view is displayed, and a "positive strength, a sunny but solid future-mindedness" (Seligman 200: 301) is revealed.

### **Concluding remarks**

Each of the young people has employed coping strategies and tactics in a variety of ways. The framework provided by Aviles et al. (2006) has facilitated an analysis which has highlighted the significance of emotionality and socio- development. The richness and

Analysis: views through a chink in the wall: competency in coping

depth of the stories has led to an appreciation of the young people's capacities, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual. The 'waves' of support, provided by both external and internal influences, have been seen to wash away the adverse effects of domestic violence.

The last words spoken by Karl, "I think like it's improved a lot" have been chosen deliberately, to reflect the views from the top of the wall. Assuredly, having completed such a difficult climb and having reached the summit after so many difficult experiences, I knew that each young person had given me a profound feeling of admiration and cheerful assurance that their lives had 'improved a lot'.

### **Voices, views and visions – a panoramic vista**

This part of the analysis describes the fourth and final layer of analysis which was an effort to bring together some of what had been learnt during the three previous layers, and which evolved into three themes.

#### **Layer four – forming ‘voice’, ‘view’ and ‘vision’**

The final layer of analysis reveals complex and convergent themes which are described as ‘voice’, ‘view’ and ‘vision’, and which emerge from the interpretations of the previous three layers of analysis.

#### **Waves of resilience**

At the conclusion of the analysis of coping competency, a metaphor was used to describe the wearing away of the walls of silence around domestic violence as being like the movement of waves continually lapping against and washing away the walls of powerlessness, upset, anxiety and helplessness built by abuse little by little and layer upon layer. The scaling of the wall has become the research endeavour, as the purpose and aims of the research was to hear and proclaim young people’s stories. The stories themselves however, seem to reflect a washing away of silence and abuse, and some successful overpowering of those formidable walls and barriers created by domestic violence. These are suffering, disempowerment, the dissolution of relationships, emotional instability, isolation, non-functioning abilities and feelings of acute anxiety, helplessness and loss, all created wholly or in part by domestic violence.

The waves may be viewed as forces or agents which act in a person's favour and which in some way possess a powerful, motivational origin from within or without the person, which initiates them and brings them into being.

The creation of the waves must in some way be related to the type and character of the wall. For example, the wave needed to disperse feelings of isolation may be very different from that needed to erode the fears of being found by a perpetrator. Similarly, young people directly experiencing physical violence against their mothers may apply a diversity of waves to wash away the adverse consequences of such experiences.

However, the purpose of all of these waves is to assail the barriers, to challenge them, to erode them and ultimately to overthrow them.

It may be necessary to encourage and create the right conditions for the young people for this to occur, for the waves may not easily or always be found within the young person. The analysis of the young people's stories has raised three themes which have surfaced from the aim to examine, interpret and evaluate their emotionality, coping strategies and their individualistic stories. The themes shed some light on the origin of what I will express as 'the waves of resiliency'. Resiliency is used to account for differences between individuals' ability to cope with adversity (Jaffe et al. 1998; Sharp & Cowie 1998). Some appear to have a greater ability to 'bounce back' after misfortune.

In the course of the analysis it emerged that the emotionality, coping abilities and the young people's experiences all contributed to a configuration of factors which formed

‘waves of resilience’ which could be represented by the three themes of Voice, View and Vision.

Voice is a theme which represents and encompasses the young people’s identity, sense of autonomy and personal rights, independence, empowerment and emotional journey.

Voice is a way of looking at the standing and strengths of each young person as they told their stories. It encompasses those aspects of the young people’s lives which express how they see themselves and what makes them unique and independent of others. It also points to those ‘waves of resilience’ which are self induced, self motivated and which appear to be independent of the influence of others.

View is a theme which embraces the young people’s ideas and expressions about their relationships, and how each young person looked out from beyond the confines of themselves and made connections, bonds and attachments with other people. This theme also encompasses each young person’s emotional journey, as so much of this aspect of their stories was entwined with and enmeshed in their relationships. Here the ‘waves of resilience’ appear to spring out of significant relationships and are dependent upon the views held by the young person and the ‘other’.

Finally, Vision represents a theme which encompasses the evidence of spirituality of each young person. Spirituality is used here as a means of expressing those aspects of the young people’s stories which simply express a desire to look beyond themselves and their material lives. Relationships with others are significant here also, and so these are

included in particular ways within the theme of Vision. Similarly, Vision possesses elements of Voice which are to do with a sense of identity which is bound up with spirituality. Again, in common with the themes of Voice and View, the emotional journey of each young person is present within the theme of Vision. The complexity of this theme mirrors the complexity of the young people's lives, where 'waves of resiliency' are present but are dependent on the spirituality and emotionality of the young person along with the specificity of their relationships and experiences. These all contribute to the complexity and intimate nature of each young person's identity.

This theme also expresses the phenomenological –hermeneutical ontology and epistemology of this research which is to 'find meaning' amidst a 'myriad' of dimensions (Reason 1988).

All three themes possess a commonality in emotionality as it is present in a significant way within each theme. The interplay between the themes reveals commonalities and juxtapositions. The overlapping and interrelationships are evidence of structural themes which are fundamentally fluid and not set in stone.

The themes will hopefully facilitate a structure and clarity within the conclusions which will assist in understanding the complexities of 'real life' experience. They contain the 'waves of resilience' which imbue the lives of young people with the capacity, the understanding, the strength and the ability to overcome and 'wash away' the dire consequences of domestic violence. As the themes are considered, the intrinsic and

extrinsic supportive measures employed by each young person emerge as an essential interpretation of their stories. It is hoped that these conclusions will assist professionals in being able to reach a deeper understanding of how young people may 'wash away' the adverse effects of domestic violence and abuse, and how they may be assisted to do so.

### Voice

The expression of self and identity is evidence that the young person possesses a degree of self awareness, belief and knowledge which may support her or him through times of adversity. It is suggested that efforts to deepen the self understanding of a young person will enhance her/his ability to cope with challenges.

'Helplessness' is seen as a product of disempowerment and suffering where there has been a lack of opportunity to "open up experiences" (Park 1999) and there has been an erosion of the young person's basic rights. Seligman describes the change from helplessness to mastery as a demonstration of a young person's knowledge of himself, "to know himself, to be curious about his theory of himself and of the world ... to take an active stance in his world, and to shape his own life, rather than be a passive recipient of what happens his way. He is equipped to persevere in the face of adversity and to struggle to overcome his problems" (2007: 297).

Some of the young people's voices claim this kind of awareness.

"It's ok to be me".

"I decided to change".



"... my mental strengths ... probably ... sometimes my sense of humour".

"An adult for quite a while ... in my eyes".

"It's my attitude, it's made a difference".

"Been growing a lot stronger since then".

Self knowledge brings the possibility of change, of growth and the use of abilities and skills which when recognised and appreciated can be applied and used, making management of situations and emotions possible.

"I picked up lots of skills what people do".

"I stayed out of the way for quite a while ... wanted to be my own person. I need time to act like a child".

"I was keeping a lot of stuff inside ... now that it's all out and I've told \_ everything, I feel that it's always going to be there but I can kind of move on".

Each of the young people display a surety emerging from their sense of identity which prevails and surmounts the uncertainty of their lives. They are not passive bystanders, but active participants (Mullender et al. 2002).

"I would have sort of weird feeling that I knew there would be an argument".

"It just made everything worse ... so I stopped joining in with her (mum)".

"Well, I was the one actually who told my mum that we had to get away and tried to make her do it".

"She'll (mum) be safe cos I know I can defend her".

"I knew exactly what to do ... just smile and give her (mum) a hug and anything

like that”,

“It’s quite a release ... a relief to know that she (mum) put us through quite a bit, but in the same way, I do think, yeh, you did ...”.

The idea that the young people have thoughts which show clarity of understanding and a sureness of the part they are able to play as experiences unfold is demonstrated by each of the young people. It must be recorded that they all received professional support from a worker trained in domestic violence. For each this experience was unique, but for some the support was crucial in the development of a positive identity.

“He basically showed me it was ok to talk ... and he said to me, that it’s ok to be myself, it’s ok to be a teenager and helping my mum at the same time”.

“At first like I didn’t really want to say anything but then throughout it I got like more confident”.

Asked how he had got stronger, after receiving support from several workers, Scott replied,

“I think it was ... experiences, witnessing things and just the knowledge and everything”.

The stories of the young people display the importance of giving them ‘permission’ to explore their experiences, facilitating the growth of knowledge and understanding of their histories (Park 1999).

This research clearly demonstrates the critical part played by the opportunities provided to the young people for them to explore their experiences, for them to be listened to, for their deepening awareness that there exist those who can support them, and who accept and respect them as they are. The space they were given provided each young person the means to 'wash away' those attitudes, feelings and thoughts which had silenced them. As they came to 'know' their stories and to articulate their pain, and reflect on those experiences which had caused them suffering and isolation, each young person gained the power to understand themselves and their experiences with greater clarity. Each had found ways to move from disempowering to humanising emotions, to travel towards being able to feel hope, compassion and peacefulness.

The space offered to young people to examine and reflect on their lives enabled them to form 'waves of resilience'. In the case of Coral, it is very interesting to see that she had remained alone during the violence. She spoke to no one except her mother, and she coped by getting on with her work at school, not having any friends and going to her room when she felt she needed to. The space she needed she had created herself, and she remained dependent on herself for any 'waves of resilience'. On the surface, Coral appears to be a young person who had suffered less from the effects of domestic violence, but the analysis shows that she was thrown back on her own inner resources, which proved to sustain her, but which were stretched to their limits.

The waves she created as she remained in solitude held her suffering in check, but she admits that later she recognised the need for her to enter another kind of space where she

was allowed and able to make sense of her life; and then, only then was she in a position to 'help others'.

## View

"The right thing to do is risk one's own comfort for the sake of another's freedom" (Boler 1999: 196).

The stories of the young people displayed a wide variety of ways that they had positively connected with various other significant people. From their point of view, the connection had, for the most part, led to a relief of suffering; for those who had responded to their needs, there was a definite risk to their own comfort which they had chosen to ignore. The 'freedom' felt by the young people brought on by those who had been willing to take the risk was deeply felt and appreciated.

"... the person who gave me that idea was my auntie ... cos she knew everything that was going on and she always said to me, she said once you're old enough you can do whatever you want ...".

Rose had held a 'picture' in her mind which she 'looked at'. This was given to her by her auntie, and it was such a strong influence, she had held it for many years since she was 'small'. The idea that she could at some future time 'leave' the life which had brought her so much unhappiness and uncertainty. Little is said about the auntie except that she was 'the person' and that she had a thorough understanding of what Rose was living through. She also possessed the capacity to create within Rose the idea of a life which

Analysis: scenes through a chink in the wall: voices, views and visions

could be very different from the one she had known. It was just what Rose needed to know.

A new view of her life was presented to her that she clung to and hoped for. She had looked to her auntie and her auntie had presented her with a totally wonderful and powerful reality which could be hers and which could eradicate hopelessness and helplessness. This view undoubtedly contributed to Rose's healing voice as she embraced the idea that she possessed the ability to change her life. Her preparations for that moment demanded that she should look to others who might assist her, and so she sought out people who would strengthen her resolve and who would build her confidence.

"...it was kind of confidence from my friends plus – and my confidence was just like building up all the time".

"... he said to me it's ok to be myself, it's ok to be a teenager ... he said to me you shouldn't let anyone put you down".

Rose's view of those around her had evolved from a realisation that she could escape her suffering. She recognised that she would need help but was sufficiently aware of her own needs to look to the right sources for that help.

"Secure attachment relationships in the family ... facilitate the development of well organised and flexible internal representations of self in relation to others" (Cowie & Sharp 1998: 7).

The young people's stories do demonstrate attachments in their families which appear to be both secure and insecure. However, it is unclear sometimes as to how the young people view their mothers in particular. Each appear to struggle with knowing how to see

Analysis: scenes through a chink in the wall: voices, views and visions

their mothers, which is hardly surprising as each was trying to see beyond the abuse to get a picture of their mothers which would be free of pain.

“I don’t think that ... she’s a bad mum or anything ...”

“I thought I’d speaking to my mum, and I didn’t think I needed to speak to anyone else”.

“... I’ve come to like them cos she’s friends with my mum”.

“... my mum’s scared and so was I ...”.

Their identification with their mothers, having empathy with them, supporting them, valuing what they value and seeing them as absolutely essential to their well being, supports the importance of a strong view of their mothers which refuses to allow their mothers to be discredited. Despite their mothers being unable at times to meet the needs of their children, they are generally viewed with compassion.

The relationships between the mothers and the young people have been beset by abusive intrusions and upheavals which have unsettled them and caused confusion within the family. In consequence, the relationships are not ‘typical’ in the accepted sense, but are fraught with misunderstandings around the part each should play and how they should communicate with one another. The young people’s view of their mothers demands a response which is outside what generally would be expected.

“...mum was the child and I was the adult ... I’ve still got that adult instinct in me but I always will have because I’ve had that since I was five”.

“She was like a lot more dressier and that”.

“I’d been acting very adult like to survive and things...”.

"I was using abuse towards my mum ... I was not proud of that..."

"She'll be safe cos I know I can defend her".

The needs of mothers and the view they have of their children effects the way young people see them in complex ways. The findings of this research have highlighted the words of Hester et al. which describe the effects of loss. "Research has shown that women who experience domestic violence suffer immense social, economic, emotional and psychological losses. These may include the loss of safety and security, loss of physical health and emotional wellbeing, and loss of self, love, faith in the possibility of change and confidence in the future" (2007: 252). The 'bereavement' of their mothers was experienced by their children also.

"...when my mum first got rid of \_ , it was really depressing because mum was so depressed ... she just wanted to drink all the time ...".

"...she'd left before and gone back with him".

"I didn't want always to talk about it because I was scared I would make her upset..."

"... we missed dad so mum started to try and get us to have contact with him ...so she would drop us off ... but then he would always get in the car with her and tell me to go into my auntie's house..."

Refuge life in relation to their mothers reveals unspoken pressures which result in a widening of relationships. The stories describe a fragmentation of family life generally which is systematic of the first phase of bereavement which comprises "feelings of shock,

numbness, confusion, unreality and grief" (Hester et al. 2007: 253). Young people's views of their mothers are complicated by having to live with other families.

"It's not nice having to share like a house with loads of people and sometimes they weren't very nice people either...".

"**They** tried to make it feel homely" (emphasis added).

The effectiveness of support for women and their children in a refuge and beyond would seem to depend largely on an understanding of the losses that the woman has suffered and the grieving process. The effects these have on the relationships between children and their mothers added to the effects of the domestic violence demands a response to the needs of the mother and efforts to reverse the fragmentation of their relationship.

The stories of the young people did reveal an example of this kind of holistic support which was firmly structured to build the relationship between mother and daughter, along with persistent emotional support for the mother.

"...then she (mum) got help from \_ (support worker)...then like \_ (support worker) started seeing me... and he said to me, that it's ok to be myself ... and helping my mum at the same time get off the drink and just becoming a mum, not the child ... it has worked ... It has really worked ... me and my mum we talk more and we just bond more ...".

The analysis of the stories raised the presence of other significant people in the lives of the young people. The view of fathers was generally dark and troubled, but remained



clear and evident despite the violence and abuse perpetrated by them. The young people were very clear about how they perceived their fathers.

“I hated my step dad”.

“...I was upset because obviously I love my dad ... but also he said he'd change before ... and he changed like for two days and then he was back to his normal self. So I just knew that it was all an act. He wasn't going to change”.

“I don't have any respect for him anymore. I did have a little bit but I don't have respect for him anymore”.

“I don't speak to him anymore ... he only sent two letters that's all. He doesn't really care”.

The views of the young people indicate an understanding of their fathers which has been carefully framed beyond the bewilderment and confusion caused by the domestic violence. Judgements are made according to their experiences overall. Despite having to fend off his father from seriously hurting his mother, Terry had still allowed 'a little bit of respect' for his father to filter through. This had gone however when he felt there were no grounds for it. The view of each young person had distilled into a clear image of their fathers which they seem to say has come entirely from themselves.

Allowing children and young people to come to their own conclusions about their relationships with their fathers would uphold the right of every child and young person to be consulted in relation to contact arrangements. Their wishes and concerns must be considered, along with a process to carefully evaluate any attached risks, in order to safeguard every child and young person from harm.

The stories revealed some significant relationships beyond the immediate family. This however varied considerably between the young people. Where some describe extreme isolation at the time of the domestic violence where silence is maintained at school and friends do not exist, others speak of people who act in a significant way and who are valued by the young people.

Scott established closeness with a support worker, a teacher and a few friends at school. Karl finds friends in the refuge, and finds pleasure in activities with them. Coral has one 'best friend' whom she has got to know since leaving the refuge. Rose has 'friends and boyfriends' but again it seems that these relationships have been recently formed. Terry tells of the closeness of his relationship with his sister's boyfriend, when other relationships are sometimes problematic as with his brother and a teacher. The sparseness of these relationships would appear to indicate their crucial and critical nature.

The analysis has shown the strong link between coping competence and healthy relationships, relationships which are respectful, supportive and empathic. The importance of these through the eyes of the young people cannot be overestimated. The understanding and acceptance offered by this small group of people is a very significant part of each of their stories. The emotional journey of each was stabilised and enriched by these relationships, through their listening and offering hope and giving emotional strength based on a willingness to understand. The security offered by trusted 'others' provided the young people with the environment to freely express disempowering as well

as humanising emotions, and with their support were able to make adjustments which resulted in the waning of the suffering voice, and its attendant emotions.

“I think most of the support came from \_ (support worker) and I think that really helped me because I was keeping a lot of stuff inside”.

“Just knowing that he (support worker) was there to help...”.

“He’s (sister’s boyfriend) been a lot of help ... it’s helped me a lot cos he’s told me what to do and how to do it ... and tells us what it’s like when it’s better ...”.

“Then I met my friend now and I can talk to her about nearly anything...”.

“Think like he’s (support worker) helped me a lot ... better”.

The views of the young people had shifted from uncertainty and distrust to acceptance and approval. This is particularly true in relation to the young women who had been supported by a male support worker. Deep layers of uneasiness were replaced by a realisation that all men are not like their fathers, and a willingness to trust and to acknowledge that “there’s other people out there that can help”.

As the stories of the young people unfolded, a clear picture of their widening views emerged, as respectful relationships surfaced whilst others less healthy dissolved. A greater certainty of relationships being helpful began to be discovered and embraced.

The stories show that offering young people opportunities to build mutually supportive relationships and encouraging involvement from wider family members who care, would

inevitably build a more positive connection with others, leading to the healing of emotional and psychological wounds created by perpetrators of domestic violence who have been indifferent to their suffering.

The instigation of 'waves of resilience' was initiated by the young people as they came into contact with others who inspired sufficient trust and empathy within the relationship. Each young person except for possibly Coral and Rose were prepared and ready to receive and use the 'waves' provided and the result had been beneficial. It is interesting to note that Coral and Rose are the two young women interviewed. At the time of interview they were 14 and 15 years old. For them, the relationship that had occupied their lives had been with their mothers, and on the whole they had not expected or sought support from them. However, the professional supportive relationships which emerged later were instigated by their mothers, and this is significant.

It is evident from the stories of the young people that 'waves of resilience' which are significant in eroding the adverse effects of domestic violence are created by the views held by young people in relation to trusted and empathic adults and peers. Once trust and empathy are established, 'waves of resilience' are created which literally buoy up the young person emotionally and psychologically and diffuse the pain created by abuse.

### **Vision**

The spirituality of each young person resonates certain common characteristics which have been used to define this attribute as "a desire to look beyond themselves and their

material world” (Collis 2009: 18). However, the idiosyncratic qualities associated with spirituality such as variations in tendency, expression and practice need to be considered. Spirituality varies “in terms of context, frequency, intensity, and so on, often having the character of gentle intimations of a guiding or loving presence, a sense of harmony or wellbeing, a feeling of burdens or pain being lifted, or awareness of a life force running through all things” (Woods & Woods 2008: 103).

The definition which will guide these comments is based on a holistic view and which describes spirituality as “a way to reach beyond ourselves and our existing knowledge to search for explanations of existence” (Stolberg 2008: 171). The search leads to an “ethical elevation, a sense of reinforcement of an orientation to the moral purpose of change and to the raising of aspirations to a higher goal” (Woods & Woods 2008: 104). “People are being helped to move on” and “answers and inspiration” are received (ibid: 109) are expressions which young people have used to try and describe spiritual influences in their lives.

It is this day to day aspect of spirituality which the young people speak of as they recognise influences which have brought them to places where ethical questions are answered and change and commitment to causes other than their own occur.

“So I tried to do everything I could so that my mum wouldn’t get beaten up ... so it was a case of doing the right thing at that point”.

“I did like PE when I was little because it was active and it was just like ... oh a breath of fresh air really ...”.

“When I was young, I used to think to myself this isn’t going to be for ever ...”.

“I’m trying to make up for it now ... cos like I try to be there for her (sister)

...I’m really nice to her now ...”.

Rose’s story reveals a tender desire to reinstate justice in her life. Her connection to herself and others is based on the rightness or otherwise of her feelings and thoughts. The joy she felt in the ‘fresh air’ is echoed by her longing to do ‘the right thing’ and her clinging to the hope of better things to come. She urges herself to go higher without consciously knowing where the energy, motivation or inspiration is coming from. She recognises her auntie as being in some way responsible for triggering her aspirations, but maintains them despite her emotional voice which speaks of her prolonged suffering.

Others fuel her spirit with encouragement. “I’ve been able to be myself ... since \_ (support worker) worked with me it has been a lot easier. I’ve actually become myself ... really”. The ‘picture’ she has of herself has become brighter and more vivid. She has obtained a clearer vision of her own capabilities, her own shortcomings and her ability to change. She recognises the truth of her mother ‘having put her through a lot’ and is able to smile and say, “I feel it’s ok for me to do my own thing now and my mum hasn’t got to be there all the time”. Rose is expressing a profound sense of being free, not just of the pain which caused her to self harm, but of those bonds which could have tied her down.

Rose is looking beyond her world and the ties of the past, and her story powerfully reflects the excitement of a journey forward and upward to a greater hope and peace.

“You can do whatever you want ...”.

Coral's quiet and reflective ways almost conceal her longing for change and improvement.

"... we might not have as much stuff as what everyone else does and things but I'm happy with what we do have, cos we started with nothing".

"I was the one actually who told my mum that we had to get away and tried to make her do it".

"I tried to just play a game with them (brothers) so that they couldn't hear anything".

"I was upset because obviously I love my dad but I just knew that it was the right thing".

Coral's vision of a better life has at its root an understanding of the part she needed to play in bringing it about. This knowledge was based on an analysis based on observation and on powerful feelings which she was not afraid to act upon. Boler raises this as being something that needs to be taught "to define and identify how and when particular emotions inform and define knowledge" (1999: 142). Her use of her agency was to make things better for others and directly or indirectly herself. Her unselfish vision had inspired her to 'tell her mum' and then to follow through by trying to avoid any upset for her mum, so that there was little chance of her going back to her dad. Her plan and the execution of it proved to be completely achievable.

Throughout she had appeared to travel alone, except for the burden of advising her mum and supporting her brothers. Her happiness lay in the achievement of something out of 'nothing'. Her inner fortitude and her desire to achieve a better life committed her to a

particular path which was created by her and which had in fact brought happiness. The power which emanates from Coral's vision has grown from her awareness of her own possibilities, combined with a realisation that her feelings had provided her with a sense of direction and purpose. The 'numbness' which some speak of after experiencing abuse is not present. Feelings of hopefulness and assurance have spurred Coral on to do all she can to change her family's experiences of abuse.

Scott has also indicated within his story that recognition of the alignment of powerful feelings with specific experiences had led him to evaluate what was happening and adopt a new vision of himself which had found fulfilment in some profound changes.

"I thought lots about it and ... I decided I'm going to change now ...".

"I think I cope just by staking in there basically, having faith and stuff because I am a Christian. So I pray and stuff like that and things".

"... they pray and stuff ... talk to me about things".

"I actually wanted to ...help people who have had experiences and stuff and use my experiences and ... basically knowledge and everything to help other people ... I've been asking around for that".

His vision drew on many attributes. His own 'silliness' was at the forefront. His thinking was extensive and prolonged. He recognised that what he had become was not how he wanted to be and ethical questions had had to be confronted and answered.



Finally his aggressive attitudes were redirected into an active and assertive belief that he was able to 'help other people'. He then was ready to consult and 'check out' (Boler 1999) the consequences of the decision he had made which was to 'change'.

The story contains a myriad of dimensions which point to 'waves of resilience' from a multitude of sources. Scott's reflective and meditative practices which come readily to him seem to play a part. His affirmative responses to the church members, the social workers and one particular teacher whom he had known for four years relay a readiness to be accepting of others and a willingness to communicate. There were "too many to remember basically ... lots" who had at one time or another spent time with him. They seem to have communicated attributes and skills which he was drawn to, and which provided him with a vision of what he wanted to become. He hadn't been talking to his family, but there were others, who possessed qualities which he favoured and wanted to replicate, who made themselves available to him.

It seems likely that a large proportion of his vision for himself and for his life came from them. However, Scott's introspective actions were self induced. He saw beyond the boundaries of the police cell in which he found himself, and far from undermining and desensitising him it proved to be the catalyst for the production of powerful emotions which would encourage him to look beyond his experiences, to see things differently and change. The outward sign of his looking beyond his experiences of abuse was the diffusion of the disempowering emotion of aggression and his move towards compassion and peacefulness.

Analysis: scenes through a chink in the wall: voices, views and visions

This move was created by Scott, but he was assisted by several caring professionals who provided the emotional support he needed.

Seeing things differently forming a change of vision is a theme which is to be found in differing situations in Terry's story.

".. my dad didn't like anyone who stands up for himself. If I stand up for myself he goes, 'What are you doing?' I go, 'Standing up for myself'".

"If you talk down to him he (dad) gets scared. He only wasn't scared because he was doing it on a woman ...".

"He (dad) was going to take her (mum) to the psycho hospital ... but I said he should be the one going there".

"She (mum) thought ... he (dad) just wanted to control me and I was like, 'Well done'".

"He's (sister's boyfriend) really cool ... he's coloured and I used to never have respect for coloured people. I said, 'Could I be in his gang?' ... and he said, 'You can be in my gang'. (Laughs quietly) I used to be scared cos you hear it all on the news. They always say it's always the black people but it's not".

Terry is ready to challenge his own perceptions and assumptions because of his willingness to see things differently. The most obvious example of this is the change he creates in his relationship with his sister's boyfriend. He is 'cool', possessing those qualities which Terry wants to be associated with, to be in a 'gang' together. A way of seeing through and beyond the colour of someone's skin and all the associations built up

over time which would have prevented an open and trusting relationship has been achieved by Terry. There is not a vestige of prejudice or uncertainty remaining.

Seeing his father differently is a strong theme within Terry's story. He had been helpless in preventing injury to his mother, and had 'cried' because he told himself 'I could have stopped that but I didn't'. He had further known that his father would have injured him if he had intervened.

"I knew he would have gone for me".

A dramatic change has occurred in how Terry deals with his father which demonstrates a complete diversion away from desperate tears to a new found vision of his father who can be challenged, and who is no longer threatening or disempowering. He is even able to encourage his mother in thinking and seeing his dad differently and congratulates her on what he sees as her change to seeing him as he really is, a person who wanted to control her.

There is a change too in his mother's attitude to her brother, who she had in the past dismissed as being 'a bit stupid'. Terry "always liked him" and had held strongly to his feelings despite both his mother and father disagreeing. Terry saw that his mother had 'changed' her feelings towards her brother, and that his influence was felt more; she had recognised that her attitudes had been controlled by Terry's dad. Now Terry and his mum had something of a shared vision of their past and they were able to conform and agree more easily with one another.

The clarity of Terry's vision of what had happened to him and his mum is obvious, and is particularly evident when he states his dad is really the one who should be going to the 'psycho' hospital. His sense of what is right informed him of the kind of justice which should be meted out, and then he had come to a possible solution. Terry never accepted the abuse because he has within him a profound moral sense which governs his choices and his attitudes.

This sense is crucial and acts as a very effective 'wave of resilience' for him as it provides him with the means of discrediting the harmful and disrespectful actions of others. He gazes out at unfairness and injustice and recognises it. This allows him to disqualify it, and consign it to a place where it no longer hurts. His suffering voice can still be felt but it is tempered by compassion and the beginnings of an inner peace which is founded on his clear understanding of what is right and wrong.

"He (dad) pretended he didn't know her (sister) ... if I told her she really wouldn't like it ... and she would cry and I don't want to see her cry, cos we've all cried enough".

Karl's vision of change rests on his willingness to be flexible in times of great uncertainty. His openness to the unexpected is heart warming and surprising.

"Someone in my family helped find a refuge ... there was one in \_ ... I didn't really know because I had never heard anything about it. I never even knew it was like existed".

"Four different schools ... one in \_. Then two in here then I'll be going to \_

which will be four”.

“Mum got married in \_ ... that’s good because he’s like \_ so we go places ...”.

Karl accepts the changes in his life and sees them as opportunities. His expectations are not really formed, and so it seems to be comparatively easy for him to embrace whatever comes his way. This is not due to indifference but a form of contentment with his life, which can only be threatened by others who let him down. His vision of his own existence is therefore dependent upon how he deals with those who prove untrustworthy, and in particular his father. Because Karl’s willingness to accept what happens is so strong, it is only left to him to deal with the consequences of his father’s behaviour.

His sky is relatively unclouded, except for one very dark cloud, which demands his attention. He copes by ‘ignoring’ and confining it to a place where it will have no impact upon him. So, his world returns to being sunny and bright. Karl is clearly an optimistic young man who will probably find peace and contentment wherever he goes. His emotionality and spirituality are wrapped up in his new family circumstances which have gradually dispelled his anxious concerns about his father one day finding them. Of all the young people he stands out as the one who possessed a ‘wave of resilience’ which required little or no assistance to work. It appears to be intrinsic to him, and has powerfully sustained him through loss, hardship and uncertainty.

### **Concluding**

This ‘vista’ has been extremely partial. The interpretations of the young people’s stories have revealed multi-layers which have produced many ambiguities and questions. The

hope here is that the significant aspects of the emotionality of children and young people who have witnessed or experienced domestic violence and abuse which have been uncovered by this study may be investigated further, so that a deeper understanding of how to foster the right conditions for empowering emotions to flourish may be reached.

Further, much has been said about the power of trusted and supportive individuals in enabling children to reflect upon and understand their experiences. The fostering and training of these individuals together with the provision of sufficient and accessible services for children and young people must remain at the heart of work around domestic violence.

It has appeared that a very significant influence on the young people's ability to form or impose 'waves of resilience' is their sense of identity, which I will liken to their sense of 'wholeness' (Zappone 1991). This would be an enfolding of their creativity, their emotionality, their physicality including their sense of security and safety, their sociality, their spirituality and their thinking (there is not a necessary order of importance).

Sometimes, it may be that we are at fault because we overlook the complexity of wholeness and disregard the whole 'picture'. We may neglect to see how each aspect plays an essential part in the wellbeing of children and young people. Further studies focused on this idea of 'wholeness' in relation to supporting children who have suffered domestic violence and abuse would be welcome.

Analysis: scenes through a chink in the wall: voices, views and visions

In conclusion, this research has confirmed the vital necessity of “consulting the child” (Mc Gee 2000: 21) and has, I believe, firmly illustrated the power and relevance of such an enquiry.

“I always looked at that picture when I was little ... you can do what ever you want ... I’ve always looked at that picture”.

## **Coda**

### **Concluding Remarks – reflections and implications**

The multi-levelled process of analysis has brought a deep appreciation of each young person's story. Each has had the potential to produce a myriad of interpretations, which have developed to a point where it is far from easy to draw neat, succinct conclusions and make unambiguous inferences. It has become evident that each young person has revealed a particular and unique voice, view and vision which describe the complexity of each of their individual lives. The deserving recognition of each of their personal, distinct and special stories has, I hope, in some measure been achieved. However, it seems an impossibility to do justice and afford sufficient approbation to them for what they have given me.

Each young person has revealed her or his story so that an in depth analysis and interpretive study was possible. Layer upon layer of analysis has brought forth a deeper understanding of each of the young people and an appreciation of their 'waves of resilience'.

Scott, a young man troubled by aggressive feelings, has become someone capable of the most caring compassion, and intrinsic desire to help others. Ultimately, his acceptance of the help that was offered to him, and his desire to 'change', had taken him to a place of peace, despite his continuing struggles at school. Scott's waves of resilience were formed by a spiritual connection with what had given him 'good' feeling, and those



trusted others who had remained with him consistently on his journey through suffering. It seems that of all the young people, his coping was dependent upon a mix of these 'waves', and demonstrates how an individual fuses internal and external elements of their lives to move forward confidently and happily.

Coral, perhaps the most independent of all the young people, showed how important the relationship between a mother and child can be. The most significant 'wave of resilience' lay in her belief that her mother was implicitly alright, and would choose to do what needed to be done to protect herself and her children, once she had been given permission to do so. Coral's role in the giving of permission was remarkable, and it is this that underpins the happy outcome of her family's story. Her tenacity, emotional regulation and self reliance provided her with the resources to lead her family, without any visible external support. Coral's 'voice' penetrates the suffering, and calmly resonates a peaceful and contented present.

Terry shares his troubled view of the world, but shows that he, too, has a desire to share the precious fragments of light which have pierced the terrible darkness of his past. Of all the young people, Terry's story of suffering is fresher and less diffused than the others. The reasons for this are unclear, but his 'view' of the significant people in his life is strong, vivid and powerful. Terry needs to be clear about who he can trust, and it is through his own understanding of his relationships, that he has been able to develop 'waves of resilience', and find happiness within his family.

Karl's inner desire and ability to remove the damaging experiences of his past from his mind and his heart, have enabled him to cope with extreme loss, and accept the past without recrimination. His story reveals a remarkable inner fortitude, and a calm assurance that everything would work out for the best. His faith in those around him, and his hopeful optimism that life would get better, are hallmarks of his story. Karl is measured in the telling of his story, echoing the way he was able to express his emotionality. Emotional regulation and hopefulness appear to wash away his feelings of loss, and his 'voice' remains constant and positive.

Rose has told her story in a way which emphasises her emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual journey. Of all the young people, Rose's 'voice', 'view' and 'vision' are pieces of her story which share equal power. It was her hopeful voice that first caught my attention. Later, I became aware of her emotional journey towards healing. Finally, I recognised that Rose's story was the one most closely aligned to my own, and this has led me to a deep appreciation of what she had achieved at such a tender age. The coping pathways that she had followed were bound up with her mother, and with self expression and identity. I have come to realise that this has clear parallels with my own story. As I reflect on my interpretation of Rose's story, I am reminded of my deep involvement in this research. Rose has journeyed most significantly, and has reached a place where happier relationships and hoped for visions are being accomplished.

The young people's suffering had not stood in the way of their being able to act courageously and selflessly. Their insistence on their voices being heard in the public

domain has fuelled my determination to work with an increased effort to empower young victims of domestic violence and facilitate their wishes. Their remarkable bravery and sureness about what they see as the correct course has taught me about their undoubted strengths and struggles. Young people are certainly imbued with many 'waves of resilience' which are inspired by a complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Each young person's experiences are unique, but they do reveal the crucial nature of a distinctive package of support, the efficacy of which seems to depend almost entirely upon the establishment of personal relationships between the young person and those who are available, insightful, sensitive and willing.

The stories of the young people support the need for specific support for victims of domestic violence. The availability of the kind of support which the young people valued and described as being beneficial will need to be considered in relation to the family, friends and others who may be in a position to offer it. This in turn promotes the idea of a deeper understanding of the effects of domestic violence amongst professionals, so support can become all embracing. Training specifically designed to raise awareness of the effects of domestic violence on children and young people together with opportunities to reflect upon the kind of support which professionals can offer needs to be available. Voluntary agencies such as Women's Aid, The Hampton Trust and others have the potential to offer professional training, but sometimes lack the means to do so.

These young people needed arms around them to comfort them and uphold them at various times in their stories. I hope that all children and young people exposed to domestic violence will have access to this kind of comfort and support.

Effective support would appear to have guided each young person in the study from a position where disempowering emotions hold precedence or were highly influential, to a place where humanising emotions held them on a course which empowered them into self belief and hopeful aspirations. The emotional journeys of each of the young people could be traced through their suffering voices to the emergence of their healing voices. Awareness of the complexity, uniqueness and convergence of emotions has been raised and with it a clear need to further explore emotional journeys and support, and how emotional wellbeing can be fostered within the context of social, historical and gender issues surrounding domestic violence. The experiences which young people describe as having an impact on their emotional wellbeing are clear and uncompromising. At times of acute distress, they seemed to need unequivocal messages which were utterly consistent with their voice and identity, their view of their relationships and their vision of what could be achieved despite their pain.

The implications of this study are that there needs to be a joined up approach encapsulating these three elements of young people's stories in order that each young person might be sustained and encouraged to find those sources of resilience and support which contribute to her or his emotional and spiritual wellbeing or 'wholeness'.

The voices of the young people are clear and unequivocal. Despite the complexity of experience, clarity is the hallmark of what they have to say. So much of what they talk about is unambiguous, and reflects a desire to be understood. Those things which occur to prevent young people talking about their suffering have been dismissed. Their main motivation based on deeply held desires and feelings is to help others and this guides their words and actions.

My own journey through suffering has been marked by some significant changes as my life has been touched by the young people. My work has become more focussed on the needs of children and young people who have witnessed or experienced abuse, as I have recognised that I might be able to offer an effective support to them or be able to ascertain or encourage appropriate support wherever it might be found. Just as the young people began to hope for something better for themselves and those around them, my hopes and wishes have evolved into feeling very much the same.

The safety of the young people was the first priority of this research. The safety and well being of children and young people, and in particular those who have experienced domestic violence and abuse, has become the focus of my working life. I continue to be aware of the prevalence of domestic violence within families, and continue to work with children and young people who live with it.

In conclusion, the voices of children and young people are not universally recognised. This research supports the need for a vigorous effort to rectify this error. The intention

here is to raise an indisputable actuality that there is a need to accept that children and young people have a crucial amount to give and must be provided with opportunities to make a contribution to policy and professional practice. By so doing, their understandings of their experience could underpin decisions and actions which directly affect them.

The power of the personal testimonies of five young people cannot be denied. I hope that their stories and others like them will be recognised, valued and acted upon so that all may learn and benefit from their extraordinary stories.

## REFERENCES

- Abrahams, C. (1994) *The Hidden Victims: Children and domestic violence*, London, NCH Action for Children.
- Ackermann, D. (1996) The Alchemy of Risk, Struggle, and Hope, in M. Mananzan *Women Resisting Violence*, New York, Orbis, pp 141-147.
- Alcoff L. & Potter, E. (1993) (Eds.) *Feminist Epistemologies*, London, Routledge.
- Alderson, P. (2008) 'Children as Researchers' in P. Christensen & A. James (Eds.) *Research with children*, London, Sage.
- Alderson, P. (2000) *Young children's rights: exploring beliefs, principles and practice*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Alderson, P. & Morrow, V. (2004) *Ethics, social research & consulting with children and young people*, London, Barnado's.
- Allred, P. (1998) 'Ethnography & Discourse Analysis: Dilemmas in representing the voices of children', in J. Ribbens & R. Edwards (Eds.) *Feminist Dilemmas in qualitative Research*, London, Sage, pp 147-170.
- Atkinson, P. (1990) *The Ethnographic Imagination*, London, Routledge.
- Attala, M., Bauza, K., Pratt, H. & Viera, D. (1995) 'Integrative review of effects on children of witnessing domestic violence issues', *Comprehensive Paediatric Nursing Vol 18 pp 163-172*.
- Aviles, A., Anderson, T. & Davila, E. (2006) 'Socio-Emotional Development within the context of the School' *Child & Adolescent Mental Health Vol 11 No 1 pp 32-39*.
- Bart, P. & Moran, E. (1993) (Eds.) *Violence against Women*, Newbury Park, Sage.
- Bellhouse, B., Fuller, A. & Johnson G. (2005) *Managing the Difficult Emotions*, London, Sage.
- Bellous, J. (2008) Editorial, *International Journal of Children's Spirituality Vol 13 No 3 pp 195-201*.
- Berg, B. (1998) *Qualitative Research Methods*, Needham Heights, Allyn & Bacon.
- Berlant, L. (2004) (Ed.) *Compassion*, London, Routledge.
- Bewley, S., Friend, J. & Mezey, G. (1997) (Eds.) *Violence against Women*, Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists Press.

## References

- Billingham, N. (2004) *The Domestic Violence Crime and Victim's Bill: a new initiative or more of the same?* B Sc Dissertation, University of Southampton.
- Birch, M. (1998) 'Reconstructing Research Narratives', in J. Ribbens. & R. Edwards, (Eds.) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*, London, Sage, pp 171-187.
- Bissex, G. & Bullock, R. (1987) (Eds.) *Seeing for Ourselves*, Portsmouth, Heineman Education.
- Black, T. (1993) *Evaluating Social Science Research*, London, Sage.
- Blaikie, N. (1993) *Social Enquiry*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Blakely, K. (2007) 'Reflections on the role of emotion in feminist research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods Vol 6 No 2*.
- Bograd, M. (1999) 'Strengthening domestic violence theories: intersections of race, class, sexual orientation and gender', *Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy Vol 25 No 3 pp 275-289*.
- Boler, M. (1999) *Feeling Power*, New York, Routledge.
- Bolton, G. (2005) *Reflective Practice*, London, Sage.
- Bone, J. (2008) 'Exploring trauma, loss and healing: spirituality, Te Whariki and early childhood education', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality Vol 13 No 3 pp 265-276*.
- Bowlby, J. (1988) *A Secure Base*, London, Routledge.
- Bowlby, J. (1981) *Attachment and Loss*, London, Penguin.
- Breakwell, G. (1999) *Coping with Aggressive Behaviour*, Leicester, BPS.
- Brown, J. (2006) 'Reflexivity in the Research Process', *Social Research Methodology Vol 9 No 3 pp 180-187*.
- Brown, I. & Gilligan, C. (1992) *Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development*, Cambridge, MA Harvard University Press.
- Brueggemann, W. (2000) *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press.
- Bryman, A. & Burgess, R. (1995) *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, London, Routledge.
- Burman, E. (2009) 'Beyond Emotional Literacy in Feminist and Educational Research', *British Educational Research Journal Vol 35 No 1 pp 137-155*.
- Burstow, B. (1992) *Radical Feminist Therapy*, Newbury Park, Sage.



## References

- Campbell, R. (2001) *Emotionally involved: the impact of researching rape*, London, Routledge.
- Campion, J. (1992) *Working with Vulnerable Young Children*, London, Cassell.
- Carlson, B. (1990) 'Adolescent observers of marital violence', *Journal of Family Violence* Vol 5 pp 285-299.
- Carr, W. (1995) *For Education*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Casey, K. (1993) *I Answer with My Life*, New York, Routledge.
- Chrisman, A., Egger, H., Compton, S., Curry, J., & Golston, D. (2006) 'Assessment of Childhood Depression', *Child & Adolescent Mental Health* Vol 11 No 2 pp 111-116.
- Cole, P., Martin, S. & Dennis, T. (2004) 'Emotion Regulation as a Scientific Construction', *Child Development* Vol 72 No 2 pp 315-330.
- Collis, S. (2009) 'The analysis of stories of children and young people who have experienced domestic violence', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* Vol No PP
- Connelly, F. & Clandinin, D. (1990) 'Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry', *Educational Researcher* Vol 19 No 5 pp 2-14.
- Cooper, C. (1988) *Living with Stress*, London, Penguin.
- Crompton, M. (1998) *Children, Spirituality and Social Work*, Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Crow, G., Wiles, R., Heath, S. & Charles, V. (2006) 'Research Ethics and Data Quality – the Implications of Informed Consent', *Social Research Methodology* Vol 9 No 2.
- Cree, V., Kay, H. & Tisdall, A. (2002) 'Research with children, sharing the dilemmas', *Child and Family Social Work* Vol 7 No 1 pp 47-56.
- Chung Hyun Kyung (1996) 'Your Comfort vs. My Death', in M. Mananzan *Women Resisting Violence*, New York, Orbis, pp 129-141.
- Davie, R., Upton, G. & Varma, V. (1996) (Eds.) *The Voice of the Child*, London, Falmer.
- Davies, C. (1999) *Reflexive Ethnography*, London, Routledge.
- Davison, K. (2006) 'Dialectical Imagery & Post Modern Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* Vol 19 No 2 pp 133-146.
- Demos, E. (1995) *Exploring Affect*, Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press.
- Denzin, N. (1989) *Interpretative Interactionism*, Newbury Park, Sage.
- Denzin, N. (1989a) *Interpretive Biography*, California, Sage.

## References

- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (1998a) *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (1998b) *Collecting & Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) (1998c) *Strategies of Qualitative Enquiry*, Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Department of Health (1999) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Home Office, HMSO.
- Dobash, R. & Dobash R. P. (1979) *Violence against Wives: A Case against the Patriarchy*, New York, The Free Press.
- Dobash, R. & Dobash, R.P. (1992) *Women, Violence and Social Change*, London, Routledge.
- Dorr, D. (1990) *Integral Spirituality*, New York, Orbis.
- Doyal, L. & Gough, I. (1991) *A Theory of Human Need*, Basingstoke, Macmillan.
- Doyle, C. (2006) *Working with traumatised children*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Edelson, J. (1999) 'Children's witnessing of adult domestic violence', *Journal of Interpersonal violence* Vol 14 pp 839-870.
- Eisner, E. (1991) *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practices*, New York, Macmillan.
- Ellingson, L. (1998) 'Then you know how I feel: Empathy, Identification and Reflexivity in Fieldwork', *Qualitative Inquiry* Vol 4 No 4 pp 492-514.
- Epstein, C. & Keep, G. (1995) 'What children tell ChildLine about Domestic Violence' in A. Saunders, C. Epstein, G. Keep, & T. Debonnaire, (Eds.), "It hurts me too," *Children's Experiences of Domestic Violence and Refuge Life*, Bristol, WAFE /ChildLine/NISW, pp
- Erricker, J. & Erricker, C. (1997) *Developing Emotional Literacy*, Children & Worldviews Project.
- Etherington, K. (2004) *Becoming a Reflexive Researcher*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Ely, M. (1991) *Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within Circles*, London, Falmer.

## References

- Farrell, L. & Barrett, P. (2007) 'Prevention of Childhood Emotional Disorders: Reducing the Burden of Suffering Associated with Anxiety and Depression', *Child & Adolescent Mental Health Vol 12 No 2* pp 58-65.
- Ferguson, K. (1991) *The Man Question*, California, University of California.
- Fielding, N. & Fielding, J. (1989) *Linking Data*, Newbury Park, Sage.
- Fine, M. (1997) *Readings on Race, Power and Society*, London, Routledge.
- Finney, A. (2006) *Domestic Violence, Sex Assault and Stalking: Findings from the 2004/05 British Crime Survey*, Home Office Online Report, London, Home Office.
- Fottrell, D. (Ed.) (2000) *Revisiting Children's Right*, Netherlands, Kluwer Law.
- Foucault, M. (1977) *Discipline & Punish*, (trans.) Brighton, Harvester.
- Foucault, M., (1988) *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: interviews and other writings*, New York, Routledge.
- Four Arrows, (2008) *The Authentic Dissertation*, London, Routledge.
- Fox M. (1990) *A Spirituality Named Compassion*, New York, Harper Collins.
- Fox, M. (1991) *Creation Spirituality*, New York, Harper Collins.
- Garnezy, N. & Rutter, M. (1983) (Eds.) *Stress, Coping and Development in Children*, New York, McGraw-Hill.
- Geen, R. (1990) *Human Aggression*, Milton Keynes, OU Press.
- Glaser, B. & Strauss, A. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, New York, De Gruyter.
- Goldstein, A. & Keller, H. (1987) *Aggressive Behaviour*, New York, Pergmon.
- Goleman, D. (1996) *Emotional Intelligence*, London, Bloombury.
- Goleman, D. (2005) *Emotional Intelligence*, New York, Bantam.
- Gottlieb, R. (2003) *A Spirituality of Resistance*, London, Roman & Littlefield.
- Graham, P. (2005) 'Cognitive Behaviour Therapies for Children: Passing fashion or here to stay', *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Vol 10 No 2* pp 57-62.
- Greenhalgh, T. (1999) 'Why Study Narrative?', *British Medical Journal Vol 318* pp 48-50.
- Grey, M. (1996) 'Epilogue' in M. Manazan et al. (Eds.) *Women Resisting Violence*, New York, Orbis, pp 173-179.
- Grof, C. & Grof, S. (1990) *The Stormy Search for the Self*, New York, Tarcher/Penguin.

## References

- Grotberg, E. (1997) *The International Resilience Project* in M. John, (Ed.) *A Charge against Society: A Child's Right to Protection*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Grover, S. (2005) 'Advocacy by Children as a Causal factor in Promoting Resilience', *Childhood Vol 12 No 4 pp 527-538*.
- Gubrium, J. (1988) *Analysing Field Reality*, Newbury Park, Sage.
- Guess, R. (1981) *The Idea of Critical Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Hague, G., Kelly, L., Malos, E., Mullender, A. & Debbonnaire, T. (1996) *Children, Domestic Violence, and Refuges*, Bristol, WAFE.
- Hague, G., Kelly, L. & Mullender, A. (2001) *Challenging Violence against Women*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- Hague, G., Malos E., Mullender, A., Kelly, L. & Imam, A. (2002) 'Children, coping strategies and domestic violence', *Community Practitioner Vol 75 No 5 pp 180-183*.
- Hague, G., Mullender, A., Kelly, L., Malos, E. & Debbonnaire, T. (2000) *Unsung innovations: the history of work with children in UK domestic violence refuges*, in J. Hanmer & C. Itzen (Eds.) *Home Truths about Domestic Violence*, London, Routledge.
- Hague, G. & Wilson, C. (1996) *The Silenced Pain: Domestic Violence 1945 – 1970*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- Hardy, B. (1968) 'Towards a Poetics of Fiction', *A Forum on Fiction Vol 2 No 1 pp 5-14*.
- Hekman, S. (1995) *Moral Voices, Moral Selves*, Oxford, Polity Press.
- Heron, J. (1996) *Cooperative Inquiry*, London, Sage.
- Hester, M. & Pearson, C. (2000) *Making an Impact: A Reader*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Hester, M., Pearson, C. & Harwin, N. (2007) *Making an Impact: Children and Domestic Violence, second edition*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Holland, J., Blair, M. & Sheldon, (1995) (Eds.) *Debates & Issues in Feminist Research and Pedagogy*, Open University, Multilingual Matters.
- Home Office (2005) *Tackling domestic violence: providing support for children who have witnessed domestic violence*, Home Office Development and Practice Report, London, Home Office.
- Home Office (2009) *Together we can end violence against women and girls*, A Consultation Paper, London, Home Office.
- How, A. (2003) *Critical Theory*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

## References

- Hughes, J. (1990) *The Philosophy of Social Research*, New York, Longman.
- Humphreys, C. (2000) *Social Work, Domestic Violence and Child Protection: Challenging Practice*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- Humphreys C. & Mullender, A. (2000) *Children and Domestic Violence: A research overview of the impact on children*, Dartington, Totnes, Research Practice.
- Humphreys, C. & Stanley, N. (2006) *Domestic Violence & Child Protection: Directions for good practice*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Humphreys, C. & Thiara, R. (2002) *Routes to Safety*, United Kingdom, Women's Aid.
- Israel, M. (1995) *Dark Victory: Through Depression to Hope*, London, Cassell.
- Jaffe, P., Wolfe, S. & Wilson, S. (1990) *Children of Battered Women*, Newbury Park, CA, Sage.
- Jessop, T. & Penny, A. (1998) 'Pandora's Box opened: developing strategies for analyzing teacher narratives', submitted to *International Journal of Social Methodology: Theory & Practice* pp 1-11.
- Jessey, C. (1978) *Profiles in Hope*, London, Veritas.
- John, M. (Ed.) (1997) *A Charge against Society: The Child's Right to Protection*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Kane, J. (1997) 'Personal Reflections on Sources of Illusions and Hope', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* Vol 2 No1 pp 5-8.
- Kelly, L. (1988) *Surviving Sexual Violence*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Kelly, L. (1994) 'The interconnectedness of domestic violence and child abuse', in A. Mullender & R. Morley (Eds.) *Children living with domestic violence: putting men's abuse of women on the child care agenda*, London, Whiting & Birch, pp 43-55.
- Kemshall, D. & Pritchard, J. (Eds.) (2000) *Working with Children who have been Subjected to Violence*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Kiesinger, C. (1998) 'From Interview to Story: Writing Abbie's Life', *Qualitative Inquiry* Vol 4 No 1 pp 71-95.
- King, U. (1996) 'Spirituality for Life', in M. Manazan et al. (Eds.) *Women Resisting Violence*, New York, Orbis, pp 147-161.
- Kitzmann, K. (2003) 'Child witnesses to domestic violence – a meta-analytical approach', *Journal of Consultative Clinical Psychology* Vol 71 No 2 pp 319-352.

## References

- Knapp, J. (1995) 'The impact of children witnessing domestic violence', *Paediatric Clinics of North America* Vol 45 No 2 pp 355-365.
- Kovecses, Z. (2000) *Metaphor and Emotion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Krahe, B. (2001) *The Social Psychology of Aggression*, Hove, Psychology Press.
- Kuper, J. (1987) (Ed.) *Methods, Ethics & Models*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Lansdown, G. (1994) 'Children's Rights' in B. Mayall (Ed.) *Children's Childhoods: Observed and Experienced*, London, Falmer, pp 33-44.
- Larson, R. (2002) 'Continuity, Stability and Change in Daily Emotional Experience across Adolescence', *Child Development* Vol 73 No 4 pp 1151-1165.
- Leaman, O. (1995) *Death and Loss*, London, Cassell.
- Lee, J. (1993) *Women against Violence*, Bart P. & Moran, E (Eds.), Newbury Park, Sage.
- Lewis, M. & Granic, I. (Eds.) (2000) *Emotion, Development and Self Organisation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Lieberman, A. & Van Horn, P. (1993) 'Attachment, Trauma and Domestic Violence', *Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America* Vol 7 pp 423-443.
- Luxmore, N. (2000) *Listening to Young People*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Macdonell, D. (1986) *Theories of Discourse*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Maguire, P. (1987) *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach*, University of Massachusetts, Center for International Education, Amherst.
- Mahoney, M. (1991) 'Legal images of battered women', *Michigan Law Review* Vol 90 pp 1-94.
- Mananzan, M., Oduyoye, M., Tamez, E., Clarkson, J., Grey, M. & Russell, L. (1996) (Eds.) *Women Resisting Violence*, New York, Orbis.
- Mason, J. (1998) *Qualitative Researching*, London, Sage.
- Matthews, G., Zeidner, M. & Roberts, R. (2004) *Emotional Intelligence*, Massachusetts, MIT Press.
- Mayall, B. (1996) *Children, Health and Social Order*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Mauthner, N. & Doucet, A. (1998) 'Reflections on a Voice-Centred Relational Method' in J. Ribbens & E. Edwards (Eds.) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*, London, Sage, pp 119-147.

## References

- McCubbin, H., Thompson, E., Thompson, A. & Fromer, J. (1998) *Stress, Coping and Health*, California, Sage.
- McGee, C. (2000) *Childhood Experiences of Domestic Violence*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- McGee, C. (1997) 'Children's Experiences of Domestic Violence', *Child & Family Social Work Vol 2 pp 13-23*.
- McHaul, A. & Grace, W. (1993) *A Foucault Primer*, Melbourne, UCL Press.
- McKeating, H. (1970) *Living with Guilt*, London, SCM Press.
- McWilliams, M. & McKiernan, J. (1993) *Bringing it out in the open: Domestic violence in Northern Ireland*, Belfast, HMSO.
- Merquior, J. (1985) *Foucault*, London, Fontana.
- Miehls, D. & Moffatt, K. (2000) 'Constructing Social Work: Identity Based on the Reflexive Self', *British Journal of Social Work Vol 30 No 3 pp 339-348*.
- Miller, J. (1994) *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, London, Flamingo.
- Mills, S. (1997) *Discourse*, London, Routledge.
- Mirrlees-Black, C. (1999) *Domestic Violence: Findings from a new British Crime Survey*, Home Office Research Study 191, London, Home Office.
- Mooney, J. (2000) *Gender, Violence and the Social Order*, Basingstoke, Macmillan.
- Morgan, D. (1998) 'Sociological imaginings and imagining sociology: bodies, auto/biographies and other mysteries', *Sociology Vol 32 No 4 pp 647-663*.
- Mullender, A. (2005) *Tackling Domestic Violence: providing support for children who have witnessed domestic violence*, Development and Practice Report, London, Home Office.
- Mullender, A. & Morley R. (1994) (Eds.) *Children living with Domestic Violence: putting men's abuse of women on Child Care Agenda*, London, Whiting & Birch.
- Mullender, A., Hague, G., Imam, U., Kelly, L., Malos, E., Regan, L. (2002) *Children's Perspectives on Domestic Violence*, London, Sage.
- Mullender, A., Burton, S., Hague, G., Imam, U., Kelly, L., Malos, E. & Regan, L. (2003) *'Stop hitting mum!' Children talk about domestic violence*, East Mosely, Young Voice.
- Murgatroyd, S. & Woolfe, R. (1982) *Coping with Crisis*, London, Harper & Row.

## References

- National Children's Home Action for Children (2002) *The Hidden Victims: Children and Domestic Violence*, London, NCH Action for Children.
- National Children's Home Action for Children (2003) *Child Abuse & Neglect*, London, NCH Action for Children.
- Newell, P. (2000) *Taking Children Seriously*, London, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.
- Newman, T. (2004) *What works in building Resilience?* Essex, Barnardos.
- O'Hagan, K. (1993) *Emotional and Psychological Abuse of Children*, Buckingham, Open University.
- Oatley, K. & Jenkins, J. (1996) *Understanding Emotions*, Maldon, Blackwell.
- Oduyoye, M. (1996) 'Spirituality of Resistance and Reconstruction', in M. Mananzan et al. *Women Resisting Violence*, New York, Orbis, pp 161-173.
- Osterling, K. & Hines, A. (2006) 'Mentoring adolescent foster youth: promoting resilience during developmental transitions', *Child and Family Social Work Journal Vol 11 pp 242-253*.
- Pahl, J. (Ed.) (1985) *Private Violence & Public Policy*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Park, J. (1999) 'Emotional Literacy: Education for Meaning', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality Vol 4 No 1 pp 19-28*
- Parr, J. (1998) 'Theoretical Voices and Women's own voices: The stories of mature women students', in J. Ribbens & R. Edwards (Eds.) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*, London, Sage, pp 87-102.
- Payne, H. & Littlechild, B. (2000) (Eds.) *Ethical Practice and the Abuse of Power in Social Responsibility*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Peltomaki, D. (2008) 'An Afflicted Waiting', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality Vol 13 No 3 pp 223-233*.
- Phillips, J. & Blyth, E. (2000) 'Who Owns the Research Process?' *British Journal of Social Work Vol 30 No 4 pp 519-522*.
- Pickup, F. (2001) *Ending violence against women*, Great Britain, Oxfam.
- Plaskow, J. & Christ, C. (Eds.) (1989) *Weaving the Visions: new patterns in feminist spirituality*, San Fransisco, Harper & Row.



## References

- Polin, V. & Roy, G. (1994) *Common Coping Mechanisms used by Adult Survivors of Sexual Abuse*, The Awareness Centre, Accessed on [www.theawarenesscentre.org/copingmechanisms.html](http://www.theawarenesscentre.org/copingmechanisms.html)
- Power, M. & Dalgleish, T. (1997) *Cognition and Emotion: from order to disorder*, Hove, Psychology Press.
- Pugmire, D. (1998) *Rediscovering Emotion*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh Press.
- Rachman, S. (1998) *Anxiety*, Hove, Psychology Press.
- Radford, M. (2007) 'Passion and Intelligibility in Spiritual Education', *British Journal of Educational Studies* Vol 55 No 1 pp 27-36.
- Radford, L. & Hester, M. (2006) *Mothering through Domestic Violence*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Ramazanoglu, C. (1993) *Up Against Foucault*, London, Routledge.
- Reason, P. (1988) *Human Inquiry in Action*, London, Sage.
- Reinharz, S. (1992) *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Rentrew, J. (1997) *Aggression and its Causes*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Ribbens, J. (1998) 'Hearing my Feeling voice? An autobiographical discussion of Motherhood' in J. Ribbens. & R. Edwards (Eds.) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*, London, Sage, pp 24-38.
- Ribbens, J. & Edwards, R. (Eds.) (1998) *Feminist dilemmas in Qualitative Research*, London, Sage.
- Ridgway, R. (1973) *Aggression in Youth*, London, Priory Press.
- Roberts, B. (2002) *Biographical Research*, Buckingham, Open University.
- Robertson, J. (2003) *Mature Women and Bulimia: Narrative Perspectives*, Ph. D. Thesis, University of Southampton.
- Robinson, S. (2008) *Spirituality, Ethics and Care*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Ropers-Huilman, B. (1999) 'Witnessing: critical inquiry in a poststructural world', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* Vol 12 No 1 pp 21-35.
- Rosen, S. (1982) *My Voice will go with You*, New York, Norton.
- Rubin, H. & Rubin I. (1995) *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, Thousand Oaks, California, Sage.

## References

- Ruddock-Atcherley, J. (2009) *Domestic Abuse & Safeguarding Adults*, Hampshire Domestic Abuse Forum, Hampshire County Council.
- Saunders, A. (1995) *"It hurts me too"*, Lewes, Frances Taylor Foundation.
- Scheurich, J. (1997) *Research Method in the Postmodern*, London, Falmer.
- Schneider, E. (2000) *Battered Women and Feminist Law Making*, New Haven, Yale University.
- Schon, D. (1991) *The Reflective Practitioner*, Aldershot, Arena.
- Schostak, J. & Schostak, J. (2007) *Radical Research: designing, developing and writing research to make a difference*, New York, Taylor & Francis.
- Seale, C. (1999) *The Quality of Qualitative Research*, London, Sage.
- Seidman, I. (1998) *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, New York, Teachers' College Press.
- Seligman, M. (2007) *The Optimistic Child*, New York, Houghton Mifflin.
- Shakespeare, P., Atkinson, D. & French, S. (1993) *Reflecting on Research Practice: Issues in Health & Social Welfare*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Sharp, S. & Cowie, H. (1998) *Counselling and Supporting Children in Distress*, London, Sage.
- Silverman, D. (Ed.) (1997) *Qualitative Research: theory, method & practice*, London, Sage.
- Silvern, L. & Kaersvangh, L. (1989) 'The Traumatized Children of Violent Marriages', *Child Welfare Vol. 64 No 4 pp 421-436*.
- Simons, H. & Usher, R. (2000) (Eds.) *Situated Ethics in Educational Research*, London, Routledge Falmer.
- Southampton Domestic Violence Forum (2003) *Southampton strategy against domestic violence*, Southampton City Council.
- Southampton Women's Aid (2004) *Annual Report*, Southampton Women's Aid.
- Spielberger, C. & Sarason, I. (1991) *Stress and Emotion*, New York, Hemisphere.
- Stake, R. (1995) *The Art of the Case Study*, California, Sage.
- Stallard, P., Simpson, N., Anderson, S., Hibbert, S. & Osborn, C. (2007) 'The FRIENDS Emotional Health Programme' *Child and Adolescent Mental Health Vol 12 No 1 pp 32-37*.

## References

- Standing, K. (1998) 'Writing the Voices of the less Powerful' in J. Ribbens & R. Edwards (Eds.) *Feminist Dilemmas in Feminist Research*, London, Sage, pp 186-202.
- Stanley, L. (1992) *The Auto/Biography I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/Biography*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Steedman, C. (1992) *Past tenses: essays on writing, autobiography and history*, London, River Oram Press.
- Steir, F. (1991) (Ed.) *Research & Reflexivity*, London, Sage.
- Stolberg, T. (2008) 'Attending to the spiritual through the teaching of science: a study of pre-service primary teachers' attitudes', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality Vol 13 No 2 pp 171-180*
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1997) *Grounded Theory in Practice*, Thousand Oaks, Sage..
- Strega, S. (2004) *The case of the missing perpetrator*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Southampton.
- Stronach, I. & Maclure, M. (1997) *Educational Research Undone: The Postmodern Embrace*, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.
- Strongman, K. (1996) *The Psychology of Emotion*, Chichester, John Wiley.
- Summerfield, P. (2000) (Ed.) *Feminism & Autobiography*, London, Routledge.
- Swinton, J. (2001) *Spirituality and Mental Health Care*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Sykes, P. (2006) Towards Useful & Dangerous Theories, *Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education Vol. 27 No 1 pp 40-51*.
- Tacey, D. (2004) *The Spirituality Revolution*, Hove, Brunner- Routledge.
- Tamboukou, M. (2003) *Women, Education and the Self: a Foucauldian Perspective*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Taylor, J., Gilligan, C., & Sullivan, A. (1995) *Between Voice and Silence*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.
- Tesch, R. (1990) *Qualitative Research*, Basingstoke, Falmer.
- Thomas, M., Snadden, D. & Carlisle, S. (1998) 'When the talking starts: a framework for analysing tutorials', *Medical Education Vol 32 pp 502-506*.
- Thomas, N. & O'Kane, C. (2000) 'Discovering what children think: Connections between Research and Practice', *British Journal of Social Work Vol 30 No 6 pp 819-835*.

## References

- Thompson, P. (1978) *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Titone, C. (2009) 'Virtue, Reason & the False Public Voice', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* Vol 41 No 1 pp 91-108.
- Turner, J. (1980) *Made for Life*, London, Methuen.
- Uchtdorf, D. (2008) 'The Infinite Power of Hope', *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Ensign* Vol 38 No 11 pp 21-24.
- Usher, R. & Edwards, R. (1994) *Postmodernism and Education*, London, Routledge.
- Van Maanen, J. (1988) *Tales of the Field*, Chicago, Chicago University.
- Van Manen, M. (1977) 'Linking Ways of Knowing with Ways of being Practical', *Curriculum Inquiry* Vol 6 No 3 pp 205-217.
- Varma, V. (Ed.) (1993) *How and Why Children Hate*, London, Jessica Kingsley.
- Walby, S. & Allen, J. (2004) *Domestic Violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*, Home Office Research Study 276, London, Home Office.
- Walker, M. (1992) *Surviving Secrets*, Bristol, Open University Press.
- Webb, J., Schirato, T. & Danaher, G. (2002) *Understanding Bourdieu*, London, Sage.
- Weinehall, K. (2005) "'Take my father away from home!' Children growing up in the proximity of violence', in M. Eriksson, M. Hester, S. Keskinen & K. Pringle (Eds.) *Tackling Men's Violence in Families*, Bristol, Policy Press.
- Weis, L., Marusza, J. & Fine, M. (1998) 'Out of the cupboard: kids, domestic violence and schools', *British Journal of Sociology of Education* Vol 19 No1 pp 53-73.
- Westcott, H. & Davies, G. (1996) 'Sexually abused children and young people's perspectives on investigative interviews', *British Journal of Social Work* Vol 26 No 4 pp 451-474.
- Westcott, M. (1979) 'Feminist critiques of the Social Sciences', *Harvard Educational Review* Vol 49 No 4 pp 422-450.
- White, S. (1991) *Political Theory and Postmodernism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Wilson, M., Daly, M. & Wright, C (1993) 'Uxoricide in Canada: demographic risk patterns', *Canadian Journal of Criminology* Vol 37 No 3 pp 263-291.
- Wolcott, H. (1994) *Transforming Qualitative Data*, California, Sage.

## References

- Wolfe, D., Zak, L., Wilson, S. & Jaffe, P. (1986) 'Child witnesses to violence between parents: critical issues in behavioural and social adjustment', *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* Vol 14 No 1 pp 95-104.
- Women's Aid Federation of England (2002) *Domestic Violence statistical fact sheet – 2002*, Accessed on [www.womensaid.org.uk/dvfactsh2002.htm](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/dvfactsh2002.htm).
- Women's Aid Federation of England (1999) *Unreasonable Fears*, Bristol, WAFE.
- Woods, G. & Woods, P. (2008) 'Democracy and spiritual awareness: interconnections and implications for educational leadership', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* Vol 13 No 2 pp 101-116.
- Yllo K. & Bograd M. (Ed.) (1988) *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*, California, Sage.
- Zappone, K. (1991) *The Hope for Wholeness*, Connecticut, Twenty Third Publications.
- Zembylas, M. (2007) 'Emotional Capital and Education', *British Journal of Educational Studies* Vol 55 No 4 pp 443-463.
- Zorza, J. (1995) 'How abused women can use the law to protect their children' In E. Peled, P. Jaffe, & J. Edleson, *Ending the Cycle of Violence: Community responses to children of battered women*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, pp 147-169.

## **APPENDICES**

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>APPENDIX A</b> | Interview Format                              |
| <b>APPENDIX B</b> | Introducing the Research to each Young Person |
| <b>APPENDIX C</b> | Young Person's agreement and consent form     |
| <b>APPENDIX D</b> | Parent/carer consent form                     |
| <b>APPENDIX E</b> | POSTER  |

**Semi – structured interviews with Young People**

Informed consent – agreement – parental consent –confidentiality/CP

Factual parts of story – tell me about yourself.

Reflect on anything which catches attention

Closer attention to anything which echoes the main themes of the study

Ie Support and Coping

Developing stories around the themes

Any other themes/ideas emerge?

Feelings about experiences

Reflecting on how you felt at the time ....I wonder....

Reflecting on how you feel looking back

Reflecting on how you feel about the adults

Reflecting on how you feel about other children in the family

Reflecting on whether or not the feelings changed in any way

Focus on support

Reflect on experiences around support ....I wonder....

Focus on coping .....I wonder if .....

## **APPENDIX B**

## **INTRODUCING THE RESEARCH**

### **Introductory Statement**

**The University of Winchester  
The Research and Knowledge Transfer Centre**

**This is to introduce myself to you, and let you know what I am doing and how I need your help.**

**My research is about domestic violence. Young people are being asked about their experiences, and what they want to happen. I know that it is very important to talk to young people.**

**I'd like to hear your story.**

**I wondered if you would be willing to share your story with me, other young people and adults.**

**The interviews would be about twenty minutes long.**

**There would be no more than two interviews.**

**They would be recorded.**

**Afterwards, the recordings would be given to you to do as you wished with them.**

**You would be entirely anonymous, and the transcripts of the recordings would be confidential.**

**You could have support if you wanted it for as long as you wanted.**



**You could have time out or end the interview at any time if you wanted to.**

**You would not have to answer any question if you did not want to.**

**I will be writing papers for publication and presentation at conferences on what you say.**

**A young people's poster or book will also be published based on what you say.**

**You will receive a copy of the poster and any publications if you want one.**

**Consent of a parent or carer is needed, if you would like to take part.**

**If you need to know anymore, please let your support worker know, and I will provide the information you need.**

**Sue Collis**

**University of Winchester,**

**s.m.collis@winchester.ac.uk**

## APPENDIX C

### YOUNG PERSON'S AGREEMENT AND CONSENT FORM

University of Winchester - Young person's Agreement and Consent form

Research :-Scaling the Wall of Silence: the stories of young people who have experienced domestic violence.

AGREEMENT BETWEEN \_\_\_\_\_ AND SUE

Sue agrees to keep the interviews to no more than 20 minutes.

She agrees to keep the identity of you, the young person, confidential.

She agrees to accept if you do not want to answer a question.

She agrees to accept if you want to end the interview.

She agrees to meet at a place which is approved by you.

She agrees to give you a copy of any publication if you want one.

She agrees to answer any questions about the research.

Write in this space if you want Sue to agree to anything else.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to be interviewed by Sue.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Copy to Sue \_\_\_\_\_/any other person, young person would like to have one.

University of Winchester

## **APPENDIX D - PARENT/CARER CONSENT**

I agree to \_\_\_\_\_ taking part in research which is being carried out by Sue Collis at the University of Winchester. I understand the research is about young people's experiences in relation to domestic violence, and will involve no more than 2 interviews of about 20 minutes. The venue will be chosen as being safe and convenient for \_\_\_\_\_.

I understand that the identity of all the young people taking part will be kept confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_ will receive support for as long as s/he wants it.

I am aware that \_\_\_\_\_ has had the research fully explained to her/him.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To Sue Collis, University of Winchester

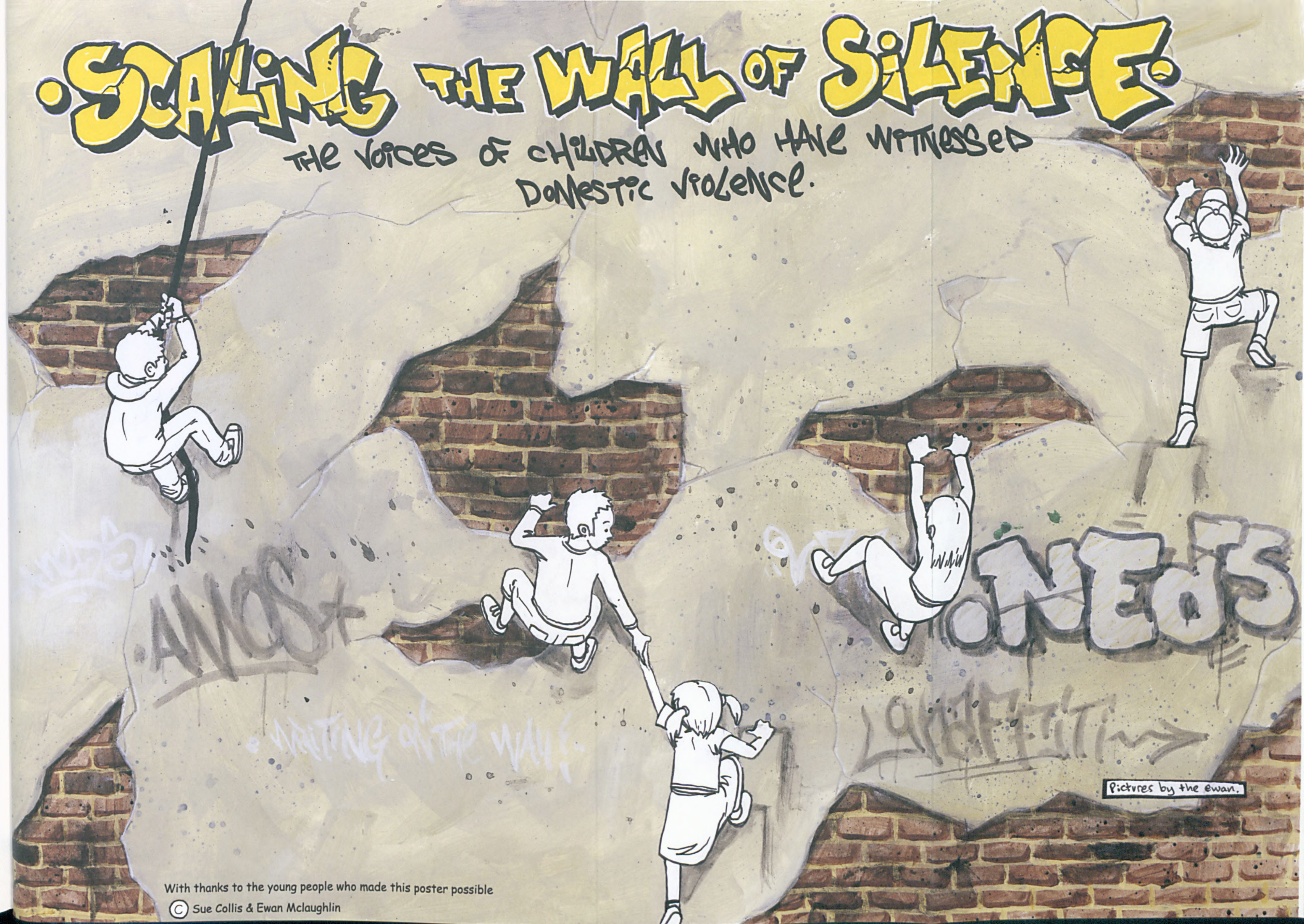
Tel:





# •SCALING THE WALL OF SILENCE•

THE VOICES OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE WITNESSED  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.



Pictures by the ewan.

With thanks to the young people who made this poster possible

© Sue Collis & Ewan McLaughlin



## Statements from young people



That's all that people who do domestic violence want, control



My Mum really would get hurt and she was crying on the floor and he (Dad) was kicking her.



I'd come home from school and I come in the front door and there was blood from my Mum's head.



I heard everything and saw things, but then I'd just be put in a room while they were going on.

## Feelings



I used to cry cos I thought I could have stopped that, but I didn't



Mum would always reassure me that it wasn't my fault... but I did still feel guilty.



I was always harsh towards my family because of what was going on.



I had lots of worries... I'm just scared for my Mum

## Coping



I buried myself into my school work.



Whenever I got angry or something, I started to draw.



There was a time when a girl was all upset and I helped her out.



I would just sit in my room and just listen to Eminem 'cos he's close to his daughter.

## Contact



Childline 0800 11 11 11



[www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)



SPLITZ 01225 777724



Women's Aid  
0808 2000 247